

CURTIS

02913
THE DEADLY
HANDS OF
KUNG FU

MAY No 12
75¢

NO MAN CAN STAND AGAINST...

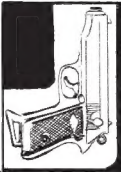
THE DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU



A CRITICAL
OVERVIEW:

JAMES BOND INVADES THE MARTIAL ARTS

MARVEL



JAMES BOND



GRAY MORROW

STAN LEE presents THE DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU™

Vol 1, Number 12

May 1975

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MASTER OF KUNG FU: BLOOD FROM A GOLDEN DRAGON

by Doug Moench & Rudy Nebres

A 2000-year-old Ninja, a ruby the size of a fist, and *Shang-Chi* in a tale of duplicity, deceit and death!

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MARVEL BULLPEN PAGE 6

THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN
SHOOT BLANKS by Don McGregor 24

SONS OF THE TIGER: CRACK OF THE WHIP!

by Bill Mantlo, George Perez &
Rico Rival

Abe Brown and private detective
Nathaniel Alexander Byrd investigate a
vicious *plutonium* smuggling operation!

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They said it couldn't be done, but we did it!

What couldn't be done, you might well wonder? The fact seems relatively simple on the surface—publish a special issue devoted to the latest James Bond flick and its half-hearted excursion into the Martial Arts.

Ah, but then come the complications, such as wringing the article/analysis from Dauntless Don McGregor, mired deep in long-past deadlines and busy making the transition from editor/writer to fulltime freelancer. And coaxing the cover from Nimble Neal Adams, who has done some of the most memorable and exciting graphics to appear on the front of this magazine, including the Billy Jack cover last issue.

To both of you gentlemen, thanks. To Archie Goodwin, slipping into the editorial seat on a magazine with only two weeks to deadline, and to Dave Kraft, somewhat fatigued articles editor and coordinator-at-large, one brief but important note:

It's only four weeks until next issue!

Sirs:

Your two series—Master of Kung Fu and Sons of the Tiger—started well, but they have yet to realize their full potential. The face value of each series remains obvious in each episode, but that value is never realized.

Master of Kung Fu is the story of a wanderer. Shang should wander and meet people—not comic book extras, PEOPLE. He needs to learn about people and gain knowledge, and finally return to the kingdom of Fu Manchu. Eventually, Shang will have to defeat Manchu, and kill him.

Some will consider this extreme, but it is the only rational outcome of this son-versus-father conflict.

Sons of the Tiger has been a science fiction strip—little guys battling the big guys. The Sons have not really been moving; they are remaining stationary to develop character, so pacing has suffered. Move them from the realm of the mundane to the increasingly fantastic. Battling the Silent Ones, beginning on the street, and then into the city, then state, then national, then international, and then maybe Interplanetary? You do not have to move them that far, but please get them moving.

The potential of greatness is present here—all it has to be is realized.

Jim Thompson
814 MI. Auburn
Dallas, TX

By now, Jim, you know that the Tiger Sons HAVE been moving. In fact, they've badgered the Silent Ones right into the interplanetary setting you prognosticated. That, friend Thompson, is service with a smile. Bill and

George are both confident that you'll be absolutely wog-boggled by episodes to come, 'cause they're in the process of realizing that potential you observed. 'Nuff said.

Dear Guys,

Y'know something strange has been happening between me and DEADLY HANDS. I'm getting to like the back-up feature more than the mainstay; not that Shang-Chi's stories aren't good, because they are. It's just that the Sons of the Tiger are soooo good. When I first saw George Perez' art, I never thought he'd get to be so good. One thing, though. How about putting Bob McLeod back on the inks? I like Milgrom's work but McLeod really made the art work. Witness the fantastic stuff in #7.

The Shang-Chi stories are good, and would be great if they were alone but the ever-fabulous Sons of the Tiger get my vote as number one feature in Deadly Hands.

But all this is just my opinion.

Ken Meyer Jr.
3110b Revere Circle
Hill AFB, Utah 84406

The aforementioned creative combo of Mantlo and Perez are duly honored, Ken. They—and the editorial stalwarts whose duty it is to produce this magazine monthly—are keenly interested in your appraisals, now that you've had a chance to see a variety of other inkers on the Sons of the Tigers (among them Tony DeZuniga and Rico Rival).

But now that the Tiger strip has had its moment in the spotlight, it's time for a few words in defense of Shang-Chi:

Dear Marvel—

I just got DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU #9 and I feel Brian Brown's letter deserves a hasty rebuttal. I am not at all interested in the subject of Kung Fu, yet when Doug Moench writes he adds a flair to anything he does and considering that Doug writes about 15 yarns a month (I counted), his stories rate among Marvel's best. Doug can take a corny hero like WERE-WOLF BY NIGHT and turn out a very readable tale.

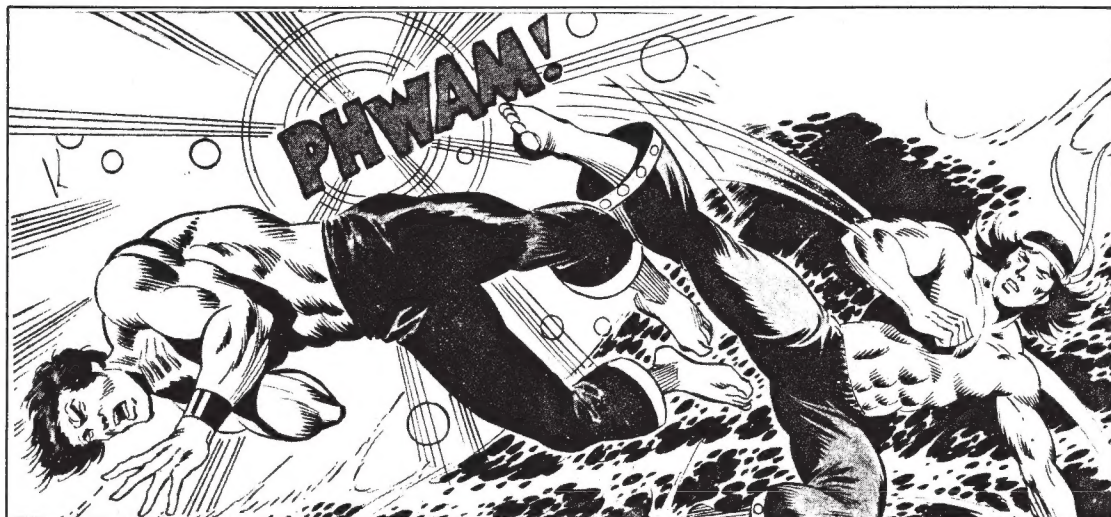
Doug's name always turns up in my favorite mags like DEATHLOK or MARVEL PREMIERE.

I must admit that Brian has some good points about the art, especially the covers—why not get some good artists to do penciling work on the covers, instead of buying oils that mostly stink? I missed DEADLY HANDS #8. I find this hard to believe, because this is the FIRST time I have ever missed a comic I wanted in my life, and I would like to know if you had distribution problems or something.

Eric Keitz
2425 Williamsbridge Rd.
Bronx, NY 10469

All magazines are occasionally subject to circulation problems of one sort or another, Eric, though in this case we think it's not so much a case of circulation error so much as the fact that since DEADLY HANDS has gone monthly, it stays on the stands only four weeks or less, and consequently is much easier to miss.

There's also the chance that issue #8 could have been sold out—have you considered humoring any of those "humorous" subscription ads we continue to produce for your edification each issue?



Marvel—

Tone down his father's appearances, not his influence on the series. Stories of Shang's past and youth are welcomed. I'd like to see him stay in New York; give him new foes, but remember that Iron Fist is the super-hero. Keep Shang philosophical.

Also, I suggest more bizarre storylines for him. Among normal folks is good for variety, but use Engelhart-style far-out adventures most often.

This is not to suggest I don't enjoy what is being done—but variety is the spice of Kung Fu.

As for the rest of the magazine, I thoroughly enjoy Frank McLaughlin's features. More!

The spontaneity of DEADLY HANDS is also evidenced by the profiles of various Kung Fu films, their stars, book reviews and especially articles on the authentic Martial Arts.

Also I'd like to see more occasional third comic stories of an irregular nature, similar to #5's "Casket of Hsien Hang." And keep those Bruce Lee articles coming; perhaps do one on his Green Hornet career (with photos) or profile his JEET KUNE DO.

The sons of the Tiger is really looking sharp. Don't make them the ridiculous Howling Commandos of Kung Fu, which they almost became with their wise-cracks and easy conquests. More teamwork could be used. All are minor requests, however!

Thank you for your time and for a fantastic publication—with a magnificent future!

Clayton Moore
5696 Charter Ave.
San Diego, California

Dear People:

DEADLY HANDS #9 was GREAT! The first story, "A Contest of Truth!" was, in my opinion, hard to understand. How come Shang-Chi didn't let the boy see him fight Johnny Chen? And how come Shang-Chi fought Chen, couldn't he just leave and take the sleeping boy with him?

The articles that followed were great, but try to print more about Bruce Lee—he's my kind of guy!

Sons of the Tiger was great! I liked how you got Aunt May into the script. #9 was the first of this magazine that I have got, and it's great!

Try to keep the stories just as exciting. And have Spider-Man and Sons of the Tiger join forces in the GIANT-SIZE SPIDER-MAN, since they are all in New York. And get lots of good fighting against The Silent Ones and other evil foes!

Edward-Michael Sullivan
Box #24 Cremona, Alta.
TOM ORO, CANADA

Dear Marvel,

DEADLY HANDS #9 pleased me to no end. The cover looked fine, but you didn't list the artist in the credits! Looks like Earl Norem's style. Am I right?

As great as the Shang-Chi story was, The Sons of the Tiger was the best feature of the entire mag. Bill Mantlo's writing is improving each issue. He has given the Tigers different and unique personalities. Bill has let us look at the inside of the characters . . . and that is good. I am positive he will PROGRESS and not let up. George Perez' art keeps getting better, too! The graphics were near-perfect and that's saying a lot. A crisp and clean rendition of every character. Mike Esposito deserves praise for his inking, too.

Shang-Chi is without a doubt one of the most famous comic-book characters of all time! The primary reasons: Doug Moench and Paul Gulacy. "A contest of Truth" was an above-average Moench script. The Kung Fu knowledge that was shown in this story sure was informative. Doug has done an outstanding job in portraying Chi's true personality, feelings, and beliefs. I know that there are some die hards out there who

don't approve of Doug's scripts. Well, let 'em rave on, but I certainly dig his writing. Although the superb pencils of Paul Gulacy are more preferable to me, Mike Vosburg and Jack Abel didn't let me down. Keep Jack around, 'cause his inks are dynamite.

The two-page pin-up spread of Iron Fist was super. 'Nuff said.

Jackie Frost
RR 3-Box 176-C
West Monroe, LA 71291

You're right, Jackie, we goofed (again)! But you guessed correctly—the cover painting for DEADLY HANDS #9 was the inimitable work of Earl Norem, who also did the stunning portrait of Bruce Lee that appeared on issue #7. Our apologies to Earl, and to you, Marvelites.

And if you thought the Iron Fist centerspread was dynamite, Jackie, then we can't WAIT to hear what you thought of issue #10, which contained 24 pages of Nebres/McLaughlin Iron Fist material!

And now, there just seems to be room for—

READERS' POLL

Incense cloying the air, chimes tinkling distantly in the background, drapes swishing ominously, we cast the fabled tea leaves and behold (with the aid of your letters) the order in which the contents of DEADLY HANDS #9 rate:

- 1) A tie! "A CONTEST OF TRUTH!" by DOUG MOENCH, MIKE VOSBURG & JACK ABEL garnered exactly the same number of votes as "SLAUGHTER IN CENTRAL PARK!" by BILL MANTLO, GEORGE PEREZ & MIKE ESPOSITO.
- 2) "THE HIDDEN FIST OF DAVID BROWNRIDGE!" by DAN HAGEN, with art by MARIE SEVERIN.
- 3) Can ya believe it? "ORIENTAL WORLD OF SELF DEFENSE!" by MICHELE WOLFFMAN tied with "KIHON KUMITE!" by FRANK McLAUGHLIN. Two ties in one month!

So how d'ya like them apples, karateka? YOUR vote could have made the difference! Please number your list in order of preference, and place it after the body of your letter—our trained aikido armadillo will sincerely appreciate it!

THE DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU
Marvel Magazine Group
575 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10022

ENTER THE EDITOR

Hi. I'm Archie Goodwin. For those of you who missed Don McGregor's farewell editorial last issue, I've taken over the editing of DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG-FU since Don's decision to devote himself to full-time writing for Marvel. But we don't intend to let Don get completely free of us. We'll definitely be tapping him for further articles such as this issue's critical examination of James Bond's assault on the martial arts. In addition to the color comics he already scripts—BLACK PANTHER and KILL-RAVEN—the Dauntless One will now be chronicling the exploits of LUKE CAGE, POWERMAN. While none of these strips are martial arts oriented, they all contain the same intensity and excitement we strive for in our KUNG-FU features. If you're not already picking up on them, give them a try. I think you'll find it worth your while.

Plugs aside, I probably should introduce myself. I broke into comics editing the black-and-white horror titles of Warren Publications. Since that time, I've also edited color comics for National Periodicals and done scripting for just about everyone in the business, including a long stint writing IRON MAN here at Marvel. After close to thirty issues of transistors and integrated circuits, the chance to deal with something simple and direct as a monkey blow or dragon stamp is pretty damn appealing.

This first issue of mine has a few editorial changes in it that are probably worth discussing. Actually, they're nothing I can take credit for. For the most part, I'm just picking up on some things initiated by Don, editor-in-chief Marv Wolfman, and associate editor Dave Kraft, which pretty much fit into my own feelings about the direction DEADLY HANDS should be taking.

Most noticeable perhaps is the debut of Rudi Nebres as artist on the MASTER OF KUNG FU feature. Everyone was knocked out by the job he did on IRON FIST two issues back, and plans were made to get him into the book on a regular basis immediately. Doug Moench was commissioned to do a six-part SHANG-CHI serial, while Chris Claremont was put to writing another six-parter featuring IRON FIST. Doug came through first. But regardless of the order in which the two serials appear, you know you're in for a full year's worth of graphic excitement. Rudi's feeling for the black and white medium shows clearly and impressively on this story, but I believe in an issue or two when he gets more fully into the Shang-Chi character, you can get set to be *really* dazzled.

The six-part serials are a way of trying to resolve a problem inherent in all our black and white strips based on characters also appearing in our color comics. Being larger sellers, the color books are where any major development in the character must take place. If a hero or heroine or important supporting character is going to get married, divorced, or develop a carbuncle on the lower tibia which increases their powers a hundredfold, it has to happen in the color comics where the biggest audience is. So, while a character in the black and white books can have an incredibly interesting adventure per se, it's difficult to maintain the kind of issue-to-issue momentum that's so much a part of the appeal of Marvel's color comics. The serial format gives our writers a chance pull you along with a more complex, maybe even epic(hyperbole costs us nothing in the ol' editorial column) plot, while exploring the characters involved in that plot with considerably more depth than is allowed us in a one issue, closed ending story. At the same time, by establishing the definite six-issue length, we hope to avoid the sort of loose and meandering story line that seems to run on

forever, such as SONS OF THE TIGER—as a result of too many changes of writer and artists—fell prey to.

Having no color comic equivalent, SONS is the one strip we can play with. Staring this issue, writer Bill Mantlo and artist George Perez begin a series of three stories, each one of which will focus on a different member of the SONS OF THE TIGER team. We're doing this in an effort to expand a bit on the personalities of our three protagonists. Having done that, the team will be reunited, but with less emphasis on cosmic clashes and more on the martial arts.

Finally, as you've no doubt already noticed, this is the second issue in a row in which our articles section has been geared to in-depth coverage of one specific subject. We're very enthusiastic about this approach (so long as we've got a subject that seems to merit it) and are waiting anxiously for reader reaction. It's definitely something we plan on doing in the future. Also, we'll be trying to use pieces—such as Don McGregor's this time around—that offer a strong point of view. Like Don before me, I feel much of the early movie coverage leaned too much on plot synopsis, becoming almost flack pieces for whatever was being covered. And, of course, we're also going to keep looking at the full spectrum of Martial Arts themselves.

So. There's plenty happening, and we're looking forward to learning how it all strikes you. Creating and sustaining a solid, popular magazine is a two-way street. We need feedback from you. One way is through sales, another is through your letters to us. If we're doing something wrong—or right—let us know about it.

Thanks.

Archie Goodwin
Editor



"A THEATER
IN NEW YORK'S
CHINATOWN,
WHERE
SHADOWS
CHASE OVER
FILTH..."

"...AND THE ONLY
SANCTUARY OF HOPE
IS REACHED THROUGH
ESCAPE, IN A VEHICLE
OF FANTASY..."



--AND WE SEE
THAT ONLY THE MOST
ANCIENT OF MYSTICAL
SECRETS --AS PRACTICED
BY YOUR SERVANT IN
MYSTERIOUS DELIGHT
CHO LEE--

--MAY
ACCOUNT FOR
THE PHENOMENON
PLAYED BEFORE
YOU.



YOU HAVE WITNESSED
MY BEAUTIFUL
ASSISTANT SHAREEN
ENTER THIS
SARCOPHAGUS IN A
CEREMONIAL
SIMULATION OF
DEATH...

"A DEATH
FROM WHICH
SHE HAS ALREADY
BEEN
RESURRECTED--



--AS SIGNIFIED BY
HER MAGICAL TRANS-
FERENCE FROM THE
SARCOPHAGUS OF
DEATH TO THE PAGODA
OF LIFE--!



EMPTY--?

BUT WHAT
COULD HAVE
GONE--



"THE SCREAM IS VOICED
WITH HORROR--









"THE GIRL IS UNHARMED.
TO ASSURE THAT SHE
REMAINS SO..."

MOVE
BEHIND ME--
QUICKLY.

A-ALL
RIGHT... BUT
THEY...

...THEY'VE
GOT--

RUSH 'IM TOGETHER--
AND DON'T SLOW UP 'TIL
HE LOOKS LIKE A PIN-
CUSHION IN A BUTCHER
SHOP!

"KNIVES!"

"THE USE OF WEAPONS CONCEDES
THE WEAKNESS OF ONE'S BODY. THAT
THESE MEN-- EACH AFRAID TO
CONFRONT A WOMAN ALONE--SHOULD
ENTRUST THEIR STRENGTH TO MORE
THAN ONE FORM OF WEAPONRY..."

"... SHOUTS
OF THEIR
WEAKNESS.
THUS, MY
MIND IS
CALM AS MY
BODY ERUPTS
IN FURY."

SHAREEN--!

ARE YOU
HARMED--?!

NO, CHO LEE...
I AM WELL AS A
RESULT OF THE
YOUNG MAN'S
INTERVENTION.

WHO MUST I
THANK, THEN, FOR
PRESERVING MY
SISTER'S LIFE?

MY NAME IS
SHANG-CHI. I
CAME HERE TONIGHT
TO WITNESS
YOUR EXHIBITION
OF THEATRICAL
MAGIC.



I ADMIRE YOUR **DIRECTNESS**, SHANG-CHI, AND I APPRECIATE THE **GOOD FORTUNE** WHICH BROUGHT YOU HERE TO VIEW MY "THEATRICAL MAGIC," AS YOU HAVE **PHRASED** IT.

"...FOR HAD YOU NOT BEEN ATTRACTED TO MY HUMBLE PERFORMANCE, MY SISTER **SHAREEN** WOULD NOW FIND HERSELF IN A LESS **HOSPITABLE** POSITION.

"THE MAGICIAN'S VEIL OF **GRATITUDE** IS LIKE THE **SCABBARD** OF A **SEASONED WARRIOR** -- WORN AND **FRAYED**, IT FAILS TO CONCEAL THE **SHARP EDGE** BEHIND IT..."



"...FOR **ANSWERS** ARE **PREFERABLE** TO **ALLUSIONS**.

WHY DID YOU ATTEMPT TO ABDUCT THE **GIRL**?

"A **WEAK MAN'S GROAN** RESCUES ME FROM THE **AKWARDNESS** OF **REPLY**.

SHE... SHE'S SUPPOSED TO KNOW... WHERE THE **GOLDEN DRAGON** IS ...WHICH **LOCKER** AT **PORT AUTHORITY**...

AND YOU WISHED TO **PROCURE** THIS... **GOLDEN DRAGON**... FOR **YOURSELVES**?



NO ... JUST THE **RAY-OFF**... FOR **BRINGIN'** IT **IN**...

TO **WHOM**?

WEIRD **GUY**... CALLS HIMSELF... **SHADOW-THIEF**...

SAY, WHAT IS THIS ANYWAY? WHO ARE YOU? WHAT'S YOUR **STAKE** IN THIS --

IS SHE **ALL RIGHT**, **CHO LEE**...?

YES, KWAI--
SHAREEN'S WELFARE
OWES MUCH TO OUR
NEW ACQUAINTANCE
SHANG-CHI. BUT **TELL**
ME--HAVE YOU NOTIFIED
THE **AUTHORITIES**?

AS SOON AS
YOU **INSTRUCTED**
ME TO DO SO. THEY
WILL ARRIVE **SOON**,
CHO LEE.

THEN
PERHAPS YOU
SHOULD GO TO
THE **BUS**
TERMINAL, MY
SISTER.

YOU
THINK IT IS
NECESSARY,
CHO LEE?

INDEED.
IF THE **SHADOW-**
THIEF KNOWS WHERE
THE **GOLDEN DRAGON**
IS **LOCATED**--HOW-
EVER **IMPRECISELY**--
THEN IT WILL NOT
BE SAFE UNTIL THAT
LOCATION IS
CHANGED.

GO
QUICKLY,
SHAREEN. I
WILL REMAIN
HERE WITH
KWAI TO
RECEIVE THE
POLICE.

VERY WELL,
CHO LEE...
ALTHOUGH IT
IS NOT YOUR
NATURE TO
SEND ME INTO
PERIL **ALONE**...

PERHAPS
IT WILL NOT BE
TOO MUCH OF
A **FURTHER**
IMPOSITION TO
REQUEST THAT
SHANG-CHI
ACCOMPANY
ME...?

I WILL
GO WITH
YOU.

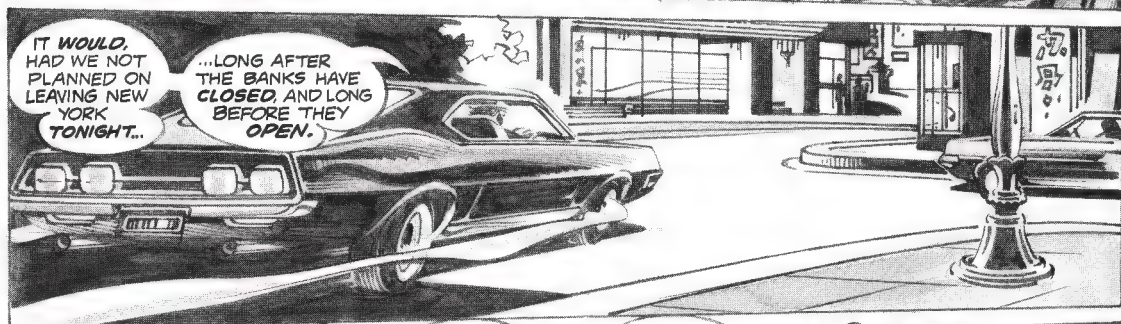
THE NIGHT BREEZE IS CHILL, AND
MYSTERY COMFORTABLE IN ITS
EMBRACE...

WHAT
IS THE
GOLDEN
DRAGON?

A FAMILY
TREASURE, SHANG-CHI
--A STATUE IN THE
GRAVEN IMAGE OF A
DRAGON, MOST
EXQUISITELY
SCULPTED FROM
GOLD...

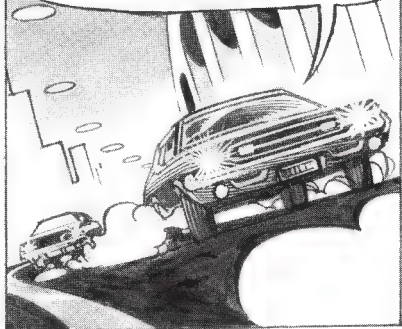
...GOLD WHICH
IS **SOLID** BUT FOR THE
DRAGON'S **HEART**, WHICH IS
SAID TO BE A PERFECT
RUBY EQUALLING THE
SIZE OF A MAN'S
FIST.

...IF ONLY TO SEEK ANSWERS
OF A MORE SATISFACTORY
NATURE.





MY OWN FAMILY LEGENDS, SHANG-CHI, CLAIM THAT THE GOLDEN DRAGON DATES BACK TO THE YUAN DYNASTY OF 13TH CENTURY CHINA...AND THEY HINT THAT IT WAS A GIFT TO THE GREAT KHAN FROM THE EUROPEAN EXPLORER MARCO POLO...



MY BROTHER AND I HAVE RECEIVED NOTES SIGNED BY THE SHADOW-THIEF IN WHICH HE DEMANDS THE GOLDEN DRAGON...INSISTING THAT BEFORE IT WAS PRESENTED TO THE KHAN, IT WAS STOLEN FROM HIM.



THE NOTES WERE METICULOUSLY INSCRIBED IN ANCIENT MANDARIN DIALECT...

SO IF IT IS A HOAX, IT IS ONE WHICH IS BEING PERPETRATED MOST SKILLFULLY AND ELABORATELY. MY BROTHER HOPES TO--



NOW.

BLAM!



GET DOWN, SHAREEN--BELOW THE SEAT!

KEESH!



THE CHICK'S DRIVIN'-- SO JUST MAKE SURE YOU DON'T HIT HER OR WE'LL NEVER GET THAT STINKIN' DRAGON--

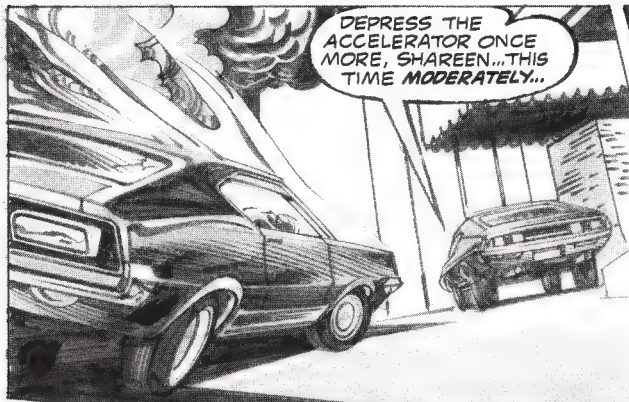
BLAM! BLAM!

DEPRESS THE ACCELERATOR--TO ITS FULL EXTENT.

B-BUT... YOU CAN'T...

DO AS I SAY.





DEPRESS THE
ACCELERATOR ONCE
MORE, SHAREEN...THIS
TIME MODERATELY...



...AND YOU
MAY RISE
NOW.

WE HAVE...
LOST THEM.



BUT
FOR HOW
LONG,
SHANG-
CHI?

IF THE FOUR OTHER
MEN KNEW WHERE THE
DRAGON WAS LOCATED
...THEN THOSE WHO
HAVE PURSUED US
WILL ALSO KNOW...

THE GIRL IS CORRECT. WE MUST
HASTEN TO OUR DESTINATION...

...MANHATTAN'S PORT
AUTHORITY TRANSPORTATION
TERMINAL...



IT IS THIS
ONE, SHANG-CHI...



...IN
WHICH WE
SHALL
FIND...



THE
GOLDEN
DRAGON!!



...WHICH
BELONGS
TO ME!!

SHURIKEN... THE RAZOR-EDGED
THROWING STARS USED BY...



...THE NINJA.

THE
SHADOW-THIEF
CLAIMS HIS
STOLEN PRIZE.

THE GOLDEN
DRAGON IS
MINE.



"BUT NOW HE PREPARES FOR A THRUST..."

HE RUSHES FORWARD, EXPECTING ME TO DODGE AWAY FROM HIM...



INSTEAD, I TWIST FROM THE PATH OF THE BLADE, AND GREET HIS RUSHING ATTACK WITH ONE OF MY OWN!



MY PUNCH PULLS FREE HIS MASK...



...WHILE THE SHADOW THIEF'S LUNGE--



SHATTERS THE GOLDEN DRAGON...



AN IMITATION--! A CHEAP DUPLICATE !!

YOU HAVE DECEIVED ME, SHAREEN--!!



THE SHADOW-THIEF IS CHO LEE THE MAGICIAN -- SHAREEN'S BROTHER...

YOU EVEN MADE LOVE TO ME, YOU FILTHY LITTLE TRAMP!!



NO. HE IS NOT HER BROTHER...



THE SAME SCREAM OF HORROR AS THE GIRL CLUTCHES FOR THE RAILING--



DON'T YOU SEE? I WANTED HIM TO TAKE THE IMITATION DRAGON--BUT I ALSO HAD TO CONVINCE HIM THAT I WOULD NEVER PART WITH IT SHORT OF DEATH...

AND YET I COULDN'T DIE-- BECAUSE I HAD TO RETURN THE REAL DRAGON TO CHINA, ONCE HE HAD LEFT ME--AND BEFORE HE DISCOVERED THE IMITATION.

CHINA...?

YES, SHANG-CHI. IT IS NOT GREED WHICH INVOLVES ME IN THIS DUPLICITY...

THE GOLDEN DRAGON IS A PRECIOUS ARTIFACT OF THE PEOPLE'S GOVERNMENT.

THEN YOU ARE AN AGENT OF THE PRESENT COMMUNIST REGIME?

YES, SHANG-CHI... I AM WHAT THE FICTION BOOKS CALL A SPY.

BUT THE GOLDEN DRAGON IS NOT LIKE US, IT IS MERELY A WORK OF GREAT BEAUTY.. A TESTAMENT TO A PAST CULTURE WHICH CARES NOTHING ABOUT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OUR GOVERNMENTS.

WILL YOU HELP ME TO RETURN IT TO THE PLACE OF ITS ORIGIN? NOT TO THE COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT...

...BUT TO CHINA...?

'SMITH WOULD NEVER APPROVE...

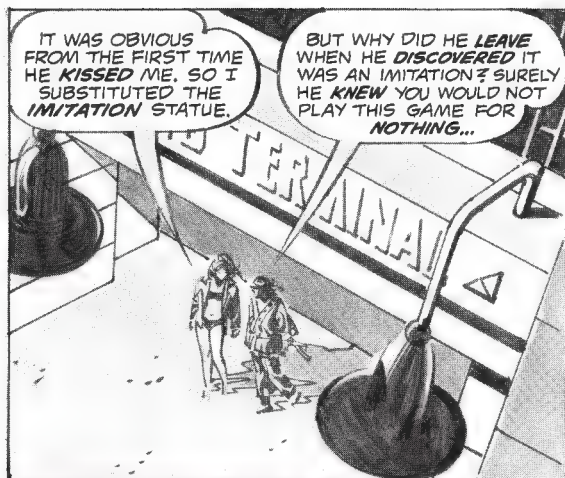
I WILL HELP YOU.

THERE HAS BEEN A SENSE OF TRUTH IN THE GIRL'S FURTHER WORDS...

--SO CHO LEE WAS NEVER AWARE THAT I KNEW HE WAS A NINJA, AND THOUGHT IT WAS LOVE WHICH CAUSED ME TO ALLY WITH HIM. BUT I NEEDED HIS ABILITIES TO RECOVER THE STATUE FROM THOSE WHO HAD SMUGGLED IT OUT OF CHINA...

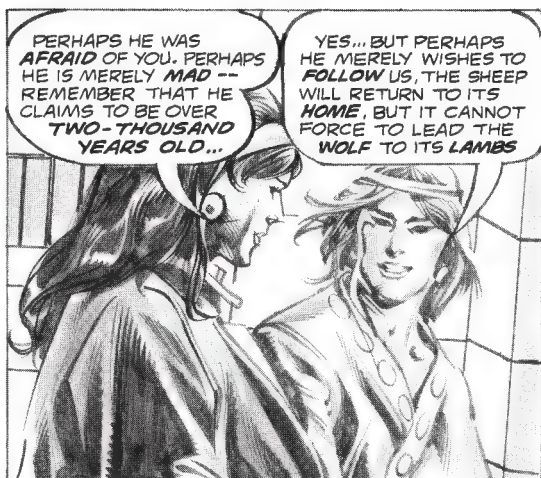
AND YOU ALSO KNEW THAT CHO LEE WOULD WANT THE STATUE FOR HIMSELF NEVER INTENDING TO SHARE ITS WEALTH WITH YOU AS YOU HAD PROPOSED?

COME, THEN--THE REAL STATUE IS HIDDEN IN MY HOTEL ROOM...



IT WAS OBVIOUS FROM THE FIRST TIME HE **KISSED** ME. SO I SUBSTITUTED THE **IMITATION** STATUE.

BUT WHY DID HE **LEAVE** WHEN HE **DISCOVERED** IT WAS AN IMITATION? SURELY HE **KNEW** YOU WOULD NOT PLAY THIS GAME FOR **NOTHING...**



PERHAPS HE WAS **AFRAID** OF YOU. PERHAPS HE IS MERELY **MAD** -- REMEMBER THAT HE CLAIMS TO BE OVER **TWO-THOUSAND YEARS OLD...**

YES... BUT PERHAPS HE MERELY WISHES TO **FOLLOW** US, THE SHEEP WILL RETURN TO ITS **HOME**, BUT IT CANNOT FORCE TO LEAD THE **WOLF** TO ITS **LAMBS**



"AHEAD, IN THE SHADOWS OF AN ALLEY..."

COME, SHAREEN-- REMAIN CLOSE TO ME--

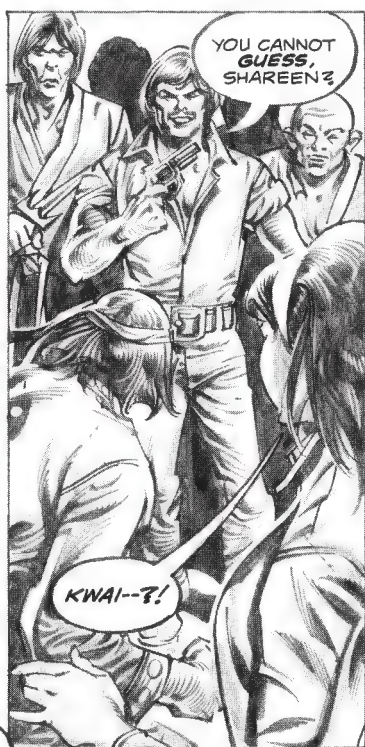
WH-WHAT IS IT...?



OH, NO...!

THESE WOULD BE THE ONES WHO FIRED UPON YOUR CAR. LIKE THE FOUR OTHERS, THEY **DID** KNOW THAT THE STATUE WAS KEPT SOMEWHERE IN THIS **TERMINAL BUILDING...**

B-BUT WHO KILLED THEM--?



YOU CANNOT **GUESS**, SHAREEN?

KWAI--?



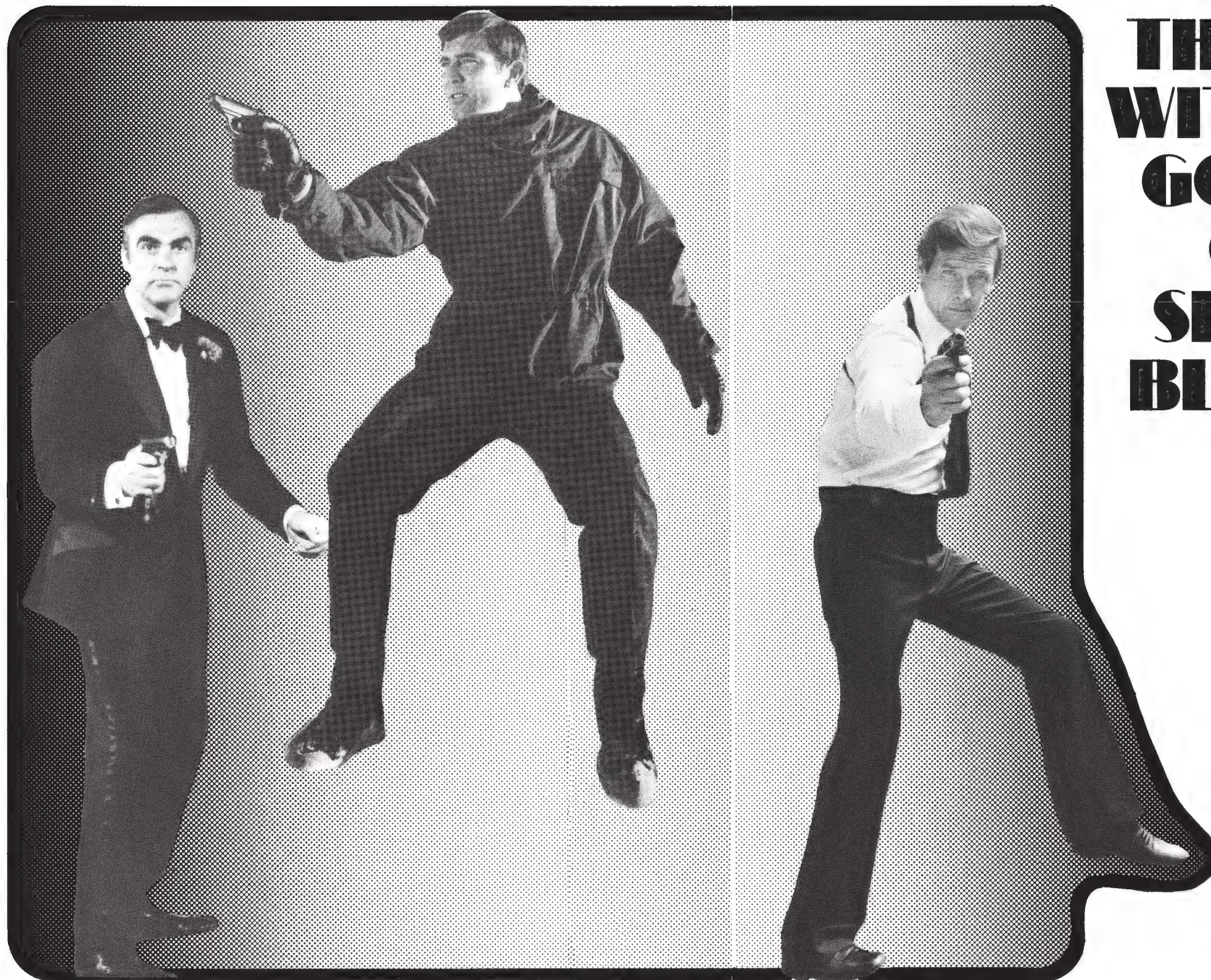
INDEED... POOR, SIMPLE, EVER-OBEDIENT **KWAI** -- THE BEST ACTOR EVER TO PERFORM AT THE **TEMPLE OF JADE THEATER...**

...AN ACTOR WHO COMMANDS **RESPECT**, AND WHO MAY CALL UPON HIS **FRIENDS...**

...FRIENDS WHO POSSESS SKILLS ADEQUATE TO **KILL** YOUR NEW LOVER **SHANG-CHI**-- SHOULD HE MANAGE TO ESCAPE THE NEXT **BULLET** IN THIS **GUN!**

NEXT ISSUE! "the **DRAGON DIES** at **MIDNIGHT!**"





THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN SHOOTS BLANKS!

by
Don McGregor

Rumor has it that James Bond is back!

Or, at least, a reasonable facsimile thereof has returned.

It's mostly a rumor.

Sorry about that.

Recognize that line? It's a running gag that was used on the 1960's television show *GET SMART*, right? Well, *MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN*, the ninth James Bond movie, bears more kinship with Don Adam's Maxwell Smart than it does with Ian Fleming's James Bond, except that the comedy timing and lead character are more likeable in *GET SMART*.

That wasn't a blank shot that was just fired, folks. But somebody is off target.

Something has gone wrong with the James Bond films, and that something is not the prophecy that so many magazine movie critics projected in the late 1960's, as each successive James Bond film was released. A general conjecture was made that the character was ancient; a relic left over from an era that had passed; that audiences wouldn't buy the suave, gentleman secret agent mythology any longer.

The critics were wrong.

The audience is still buying the films, albeit at an increased ticket rate for admission into the theater; but once there, they don't come near receiving for their money the kind of entertainment they did

for two dollars when **GOLDFINGER** was first released in 1964.

The makers of the Bond films, Albert R. Broccoli and Harry Saltzman, have kept the films topical, updating them from Fleming's book, which is one of the reasons why there is a Kung Fu slant to **MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN**. Of course, they did it better in the fifth Bond film, **YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE**, with a samurai and ninja training sequence which was more effective than most of the Martial Arts shenanigans in **GOLDEN GUN**.

Topicality isn't the only reason the critics were wrong.

There were many critics who doomed Sherlock Holmes to the same early demise and yet Doyle's character remains as popular a fictional hero as ever, if not more so; and Fleming's Bond has much the same sort of following, attested to by the fact that numerous hard-bound novels have dissected the series and the character while other non-fiction entries examined the films.

Yes, there are James Bond fanatics, even these days. Much of the merchandising that existed during the middle 60's has perished. 007 talcum powder is not a readily-available product these days, but you can still buy yourself a James Bond miniature Aston Martin, or a toy moon buggy from the seventh Bond film, **DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER**, for a mere \$3.95 plus tax.

Back in the late 50's, before President John F. Kennedy named **FROM RUSSIA, WITH LOVE**—the fifth James Bond novel—as one of his ten favorite books, there were very few James Bond fans. James Bond was not yet fashionable, but even then there was a cult growing; and I was in that minority, swept up into the James Bond mythos on one lonely holiday.

It was New Year's Eve. Dark with solitude more than promise, and cold with the kind of biting wind that turns the country sky clear and sharp. New Year's Eve is not the time for being alone. One tends to be too introspectively morose. There are too many questions about the future, and the answers are ambiguous torture.

I had begun reading **DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER**. I must admit I wasn't immediately grabbed by the book, in fact I probably only continued reading it that night because there was nothing else to do. Standing under a streetlight after walking a few miles to see if a friend was home, I read a few more paragraphs and came to a startling act of villainy that was completely unexpected. Everything had been so mundane up to that point, and suddenly there were callous men pouring boiling hot mud into their victim's eyes.

That *couldn't* be what I'd read.

It was. And James Bond went up against that menacing crowd, the Spangler mob, claiming me forever as a member of his following. It's so seldom



Bond trying out for an Alka Seltzer commercial: "I can't believe I ate the whole thing!"

we remember any single moment that affects our consciousness the first moment we become aware of something. Try to remember the first time you met an old friend. Sometimes it seems like the friendship has always been there, or you can recall when you became good friends, but not really when you first met. I remember that first meeting with James Bond. Clearly.

I reach back for that recollection because of the critique made above, comparing this latest Bond film with **GET SMART**, because I am not ignoring those roots in my past. I loved those books.

And the movies.

You do not go to see **GOLDFINGER** sixteen times unless you have some sort of unbalanced fanaticism, and that is also a part of my past. The sixteen times *and* the unbalanced fanaticism.

This background is not for recollections sake or nostalgic indulgence. It appeared to me that many of the harshest Bond critics were completely out of touch with the character nor had any contact with us walking-around-on-the-streets type people. They'd positioned themselves in some cloistered chambers of judgment, and anyone who liked such "trivial trash" was put down as harshly as they put down the films. This article is not a repeat performance of that kind of attitude. It is from one who has loved the James Bond canon and loved them well.

Back in those early years of the films, if someone had extended an invitation to see a preview showing of **GOLDFINGER**, it would have been an incom-

parable offer. I still retained a bit of that excitement, hoping that the new film would revive what the last had lost.

Here it is, 1975, and I was sitting at a preview showing of **MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN** and I was hoping.

When I walked back out into the Manhattan night, the crowd jostling past me, I felt empty. Bleak. Fighting the thought.

It is over! Oh, the films have their occasional moments, but the special excitement, the long expectant wait for the next Bond thriller, is gone.

And it's just possible that it's gone . . . forever.

MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN has some elements that are superior to **LIVE AND LET DIE**. The accent is off continuous, meaningless chases. A villain with an identity is established. On location photography is better than it has been in the last couple. But there are also elements that are corroding the Bond concept, eating away at it like acid, and in my recounting of this latest Bond caper there is an attempt to understand what is happening to an old and valued friend.

For those who still care.

* * *

The Bond films open traditionally with a teaser, that oftentimes has little to do with the actual plot. In **MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN**, the teaser introduces us to Francisco Scaramanga (Christopher Lee) and his Asian island sanctuary. The island is beautifully lensed, a natural location for a villain's retreat, with impressive volcanic rock structures ripping out of the tropical blue waters.



Martial Arts really don't make the scene in this three-to-one gang-up against Bond, but it's better than any fight choreographed for LIVE AND LET DIE.

Scaramanga's island hideaway was filmed at Kao-Ping-Kan on the Gulf of Siam, which required the cast to travel an hour each way to get to and from the tiny island, necessitating some discomfort to the cast perhaps—but the unique setting is one of the strongest assets of the film.

Scaramanga is sun bathing on the beach with his lady consort, Andrea (Maud Adams), when his assistant and servant, Nick Nack (Herve Villechaize) appears to tell Scaramanga that they have company on the island. Immediately, we have two characters who have distinct visual identities. Scaramanga has three nipples adorning his chest and Nick Nack stands somewhere around three feet tall.

LIVE AND LET DIE lacked any real villain for Bond to confront, but at least **GUN** offers an adversary. The opening pre-credit action has mood and atmosphere, something the last Bond film lacked; but even here it does not compete, let's say, with the opening action of **GOLDFINGER** or **ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE**.

Nick Nack enters the interior of the house, which is built into the mountain-side. A man is waiting for Nick Nack inside, and though he isn't given a name, he is one of the Mafia-type villains who appeared in **DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER** and threw Plenty O'Toole out of Bond's hotel room window into the swimming pool.

Nick Nack tells the hoodlum to wait for Scaramanga inside a huge room that is a combination gymnasium and rifle range. The sets in this film are designed

by Peter Murton, and they lack the futuristic metallic fabrications that Ken Adams, who worked on nearly all the Bond films, constructed. They still have the elaborate furnishings, though.

Scaramanga enters the room and the stalking begins. It appears that Scaramanga has set up his own indoor version of the most dangerous game. Nick Nack watches the events from a small window set into a control room which sets off many of the gimmicks in the stalking room. The gangster is as confused as we are when he stumbles into the dark corridor where Scaramanga has disappeared and finds himself falling through optical illusions. It is a hunter's version of a fun house, replete with pop up or down figures of skeletons, cowboys and 1920's racketeers. The gangster trips over the deceptive flooring, fires his gun nervously at both cowboys and racketeers until he realizes he's been firing at cardboard figures.

The scene is vaguely reminiscent of a few situations from the British TV series, **THE AVENGERS**. They used oddly-constructed rooms for time travelling (supposedly), or game rooms to kill intended victims. And for the most part, they carried off the optical effects with cleverer devices than are used in **GUN**.

That is one of the minor problems with **GUN**, when compared with earlier Bond entries, where the audience was always taken aback by the extraordinary events and circumstances. Most adventure films could never compete with the Saltzman and Broccoli Bonds, because they did not have the budget for gimmicks and ef-

fects which were wilder and more extravagant than the audience anticipated. When the television series, even one as well done as many of **THE AVENGERS** episodes are, can match, on any level, the situation happening in a Bond film, it means the Bond movies have lost part of the special attraction, that unique combination of audacity and extravagance that was their trademark. Where else could you get a replica of Fort Knox, an Aston Martin that did every-thing but carry a Port-A-John and a king-size bed? Where else could you see an underwater hijacking of hydrogen bombs, as well as a yacht which could shed its back half, like a cocoon, and become a hydrofoil?

Nowhere.

The Matt Helm films, the Our Man Flint films—none of the imitators and parodies of the Bond character could ever come close. Unfortunately, these days, it's obvious that they can!

The gangster is still armed, searching around in the dark, while Scaramanga keeps himself hidden. Nick Nack taunts him.

"I wonder where you can find your gun, Mister Scaramanga?" his voice floats over the eerie darkness.

"Your little golden gun," he adds, the voice mockingly hollow.

The Golden Gun suddenly lights up, but it's not that easy to reach it since the room is a confusion of mirrors that supposedly create a maze. The gangster is still searching for Scaramanga, but he has the common sense to be nervous. He has good reason. Scaramanga finally finds the way to the Golden Gun. It is set down a flight of stairs, which he causes to turn into a slide at the push of a button.

Scaramanga dashes for the stairs as the gangster fires, and he slides down the slanting platform, rolling into a somersault when he reaches the bottom.

The gangster shoots repeatedly but comes nowhere near Scaramanga. The somersault brings Scaramanga to the display case where the Golden Gun is spotlighted.

Scaramanga needs only one shot!

The villain falls . . . dead!

"This one was the best, master," Nick Nack tells him over the sound system.

"Not bad," says Scaramanga, but he doesn't sound impressed. "Not bad at all. You'll have to do better than that if you want to come into my money."

"I'll get you yet," Nick Nack says cheerfully.

The relationship between Nick Nack and Scaramanga is never fully explained, but at least they have a superficial sheen, and they are interesting, with exotic idiosyncracies, something the Bond films have not really had since **GOLDFINGER**. Goldfinger and Odd-Job were superb antagonists, almost of a classic stature, and they were the kind of villains that Fleming often threw against Bond. They were immense, and one had the impression that Bond didn't stand a

chance in hell against them. Quite often, he really didn't, but the Fleming Bond's major attribute was dogmatic survival, which he did quite often and painfully. DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER has Mr. Wint and Mr. Kidd, the homosexual killers, to oppose Bond—but they are minor characters. Mr. Big, in LIVE AND LET DIE, is nearly as colorless a villain as Blofeld was in many of the later Bond films, although the Mr. Big character was certainly a villain to stagger the imagination in the novel version. At least GUN opens with hope that the Bond films will return to the superb blend of action and conflict. The hope doesn't last.

We see that a statue of James Bond stands in the fun house room. Unless they managed to find a mannequin that wobbles, director Guy Hamilton used Roger Moore as the supposedly sculptured figure of Bond, and when Scaramanga shoots the fingers off the Bond statue, it is from behind so that we can't see the Moore image anymore.

The moment I saw that wobbling statue standing in the stalking room, I knew what they were going to do.

They won't do it, I told myself. They wouldn't resort to that old-as-the-hills trick.

But they did!

* * *

The opening credits are standard Bond with silhouetted girl-shapes moving fluidly against swirls of colorful mosaics accompanied by John Barry music. It is an-

other beneficial aspect to GUN, having Barry once more composing the musical score—even if most of the soundtrack is variations of the GOLDEN GUN theme. At least Barry knows when to add the music and what kind of intensity or mood is needed for a scene.

The film proper opens inside M's office as he questions Bond about Scaramanga. It seems Scaramanga is a professional assassin who charges a million dollars a hit and kills all of his victims with gold bullets. A bullet has just come to the Secret Service for James Bond—a gold bullet no less, and carved into its surface is the 007 number.

Now wait a minute, gang.

How did Scaramanga know where to send the bullet? And if he did know where to send the bullet, why is he so familiar with Bond's double-0 number? And isn't it a bit much when, as we learn later, Scaramanga thinks of himself and Bond as titans about to duel? Bond's worth as a secret agent is obviously nil, and the British espionage quarters are nearly defunct if we believe all that. Granted, in the film DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER, Jill St. John as Tiffany Case tells a Sean Connery Bond that he has just killed the famous James Bond (Connery had actually switched identification cards with the dead man), but it is hardly as distracting as this admission, since the initial thrust of GUN hangs on this development.

M. (Bernard Lee) tells Bond that he is taking him off the assignment that Bond

has been currently pursuing: locating a scientist named Gibson and his solar cell battery, before opposing countries get to him. The concept ties in with the energy crisis that threatens us, but it is surprising they eliminated one of Scaramanga's major schemes in the MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN novel, which involves cleverly manipulating a way to raise sugar prices in America. Remembering that the book was written in 1964, it certainly was prophetic and makes one wonder if a real life Scaramanga (we have them—they're far less flamboyant than Fleming's villains, but they are there) didn't have something to do with such a high rise in sugar costs.

It is also unfortunate that they chose not to use the novel's opening sequence, since it could have translated into a superb visual confrontation between Bond and M. The novel begins with Bond being brainwashed and sent to assassinate M.

Now that would be a precredit opening.

Alas, since the books have been filmed out of order, and with little of the actual storylines used, except for the titles and the villain's names, it probably will never come to pass.

M. tells Bond that, yes, the Gibson solar project is important and therefore he cannot risk having Scaramanga show up trying to kill Bond and jeopardizing the entire operation. Bond decides to track Scaramanga down and kill him first.

Problem is, no one knows what Scaramanga looks like.

Bond stops by Moneypenny (Lois Maxwell) and questions her about the death of 002, who might have been killed by Scaramanga. The agent met his death in Beirut while attending a cabaret where a Beirut belly dancer named Saida (Carmen Sautoy) makes her navel dance.

"Moneypenny you are better than a computer," says Moore/Bond, but somehow the running banter that has been a mainstay of the Bond films lacks the gentle trace of affection that once was there.

"In all sorts of ways," says Moneypenny in typical Moneypenny fashion. "But you never take advantage of them."

The reason Scaramanga was never confirmed as 002's assassin is that his golden bullet was never located, but it doesn't take our boy Bond long to learn where it is. One visit to the cabaret and Saida, the Beirut belly dancer, rolls her navel at him during her dance and, incidentally, rolls the gold bullet at him since she has it plugged into her navel.

How the investigating agents missed that is anybody's guess.

The moment the girl finishes her dance, Bond follows her to her dressing room which three villain types follow him with their eyes. Bond doesn't forget to take his cigar with him when he makes his exit.

What's that? James Bond smokes a



Despite that halo effect from the overheard light fixture, this is not the Saint in pose, but James Bond about to prove his cool masculine ability by assuming a plastic store mannequin pose before he disarms Scaramanga's playmate, Andrea, who doesn't have a chance. She's slapped around by Bond and killed by Scaramanga.

cigar?

No, Roger Moore smokes a cigar. That's a fan thing, and very minor to pick up, but one wonders if the Beirut belly dancer minds stale cigar breath when Moore/Bond starts putting the make on her.

All in the line of duty, of course.

To get the gold bullet, you understand.

Bond begins kissing the lady's abdomen while saying clever things like, "You really do have a . . . magnificent abdomen."

You don't have to believe it, folks, but there it is.

The door to the dressing room bangs open into Bond's back the moment he gets the bullet in his mouth. He gulps in exaggerated fashion and his eyes go wide, all telling us—yes, folks—that James Bond has swallowed the golden bullet.

The Bond films have always had a roguish charm about them, a double-entendre here, a clever quip there; but in GUN the slapstick humor that was played so heavily in LIVE AND LET DIE takes another turn.

Ridiculing the character.

The audience does not laugh with Bond. They laugh *at* him! Now, obvious-

ly, these films are not meant to be taken seriously. They are not what you'd call a reflection of life. Everything is exaggeration, and a sophisticated sense of humor keeps the activities lively.

Bond, in this scene and others to come, is a buffoon, the Maxwell Smart of British intelligence. It is a distressing turn of events.

Fortunately, a fight breaks out immediately between Bond and three villains. As Bond battles go, this isn't a classic, but one is looking for anything that will take away the memory of Bond gulping down the bullet; and since LIVE AND LET DIE featured no real hand-to-hand combat, it's a nice return. It lacks the power of the Red Grant vs. Bond fight in FROM RUSSIA, WITH LOVE, and certainly comes nowhere close to the magnificent battle with Odd-Job in the vaults of Fort Knox, or even the precredits battle in GOLDFINGER that ends up with the "absolutely

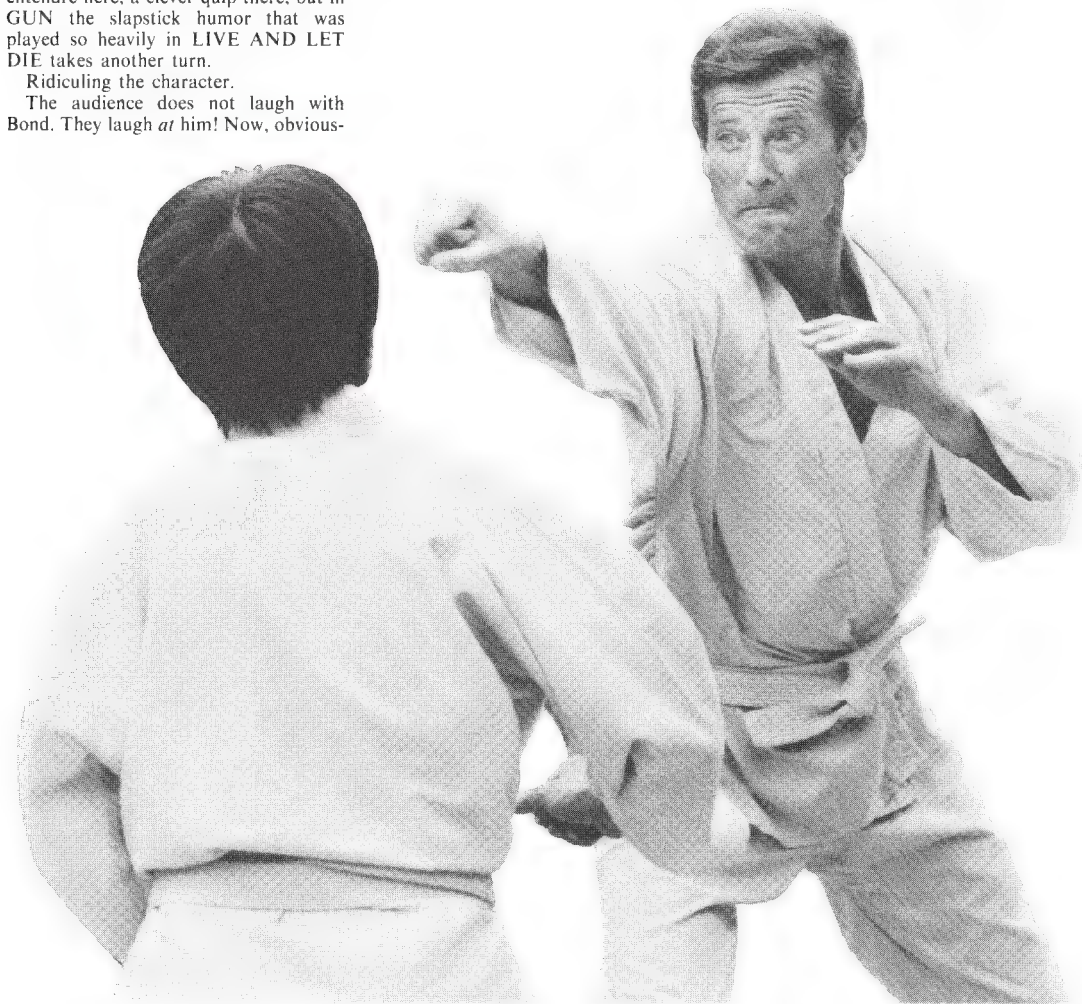
shocking" electrocution of the villain. Even the elevator fight in DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER is superior to this conflict, but some of the old sharp editing is brought back into play, keeping a staccato, drive hammer effect to the action.

Moore moves better in these stunts than he does in any of the later action scenes, but he still holds himself too open to attack; and the villains sometimes await his fists without trying to move out of the way.

Even though he's telegraphed the punch through Western Union.

One of the villains swings a chair at Bond, who does some swinging himself and flings one of the other villains into the crashing chair. Moore, in *Fighting Stars Magazine*, says the stunt with the chair went well enough, but when the actor landed on the floor it was right into a nail about three inches long that went into his backside.

That's almost as embarrassing as swol-



Roger Moore in repose.

lowing a golden bullet.

Bond escapes from the room and hails a taxi, asking for the nearest pharmacy (you can guess why, another snide little joke) and once Bond has gotten his hands back on the bullet, he takes it to Q. (Desmond Llewellyn), who with Boothroyd determines that the bullet was made for Scaramanga by a gunsmith in Macao known as Lazar.

Bond, obviously, has an expense account that is incredible because, before you know it, Bond is in Lazar's weapon cellar listening to Lazar say such things as, "It would be the proudest moment of my career to make something for you, Mr. Bond."

Bond's anonymity is shot to hell, and therefore his worth as a secret agent, but this scene is least offensive of others to come. A quick routine is worked in with one of Lazar's rifles that fires low. Bond aims the weapon at Lazar's groin and asks who picks up Scaramanga's gold bullets when they are made.

"Speak," says Moore/Bond, aiming at the man's crotch, "or forever hold your piece."

The double entendres are, if you'll pardon the expression, stiffer than they were in the earlier films. Connery tossed them off with a nonchalant air, without deliberation; an understatement rather than a didactic pronouncement. And many of the double entendres in GUN are repetitions or variations of remarks which have done before.

Lazar tells Bond about the connection. The gold bullets are put into a cigarette case and transferred at the gaming tables of a casino to an unknown contact. Since there is a transaction due to be delivered, Bond watches it from a distance and we see Andrea (from the opening of the film) receive the cigarette box of bullets. Bond follows her to Hong Kong Harbor, where he meets up with another British agent: Mary Goodnight (Britt Ekland). If Bond is a male Maxwell Smart at times, Mary is a female Maxwell Smart almost all the time.

The two of them do not get along at all. It is never really explained what the antagonism is between them. Sexist Bond, presumably, just hates female agents, chauvinist pig that he is. And in this film, there is no doubt about it. Bond hasn't a redemnable quality about him. He is obnoxious, plastically stoic and seemingly completely unfeeling. More on that statement in a moment.

Bond lets himself into Andrea's room, pulls out his gun and interrupts her shower. Barry's background music is traditional Bond, and it is nice to have it back, haunting piano keys giving the scene more buildup than it deserves. At Bond's intrusion, Andrea steps out of the shower with a gun (an old John Wayne trick from a film called BIG JAKE, and probably many films earlier than that) and tells him to leave. Bond knocks the gun out of her hand and throws her onto the bed, face first, putting his knee into



Bond demonstrates fluid movement in a graceful retreat.

her back and twisting her arm behind her.

If he was unlikeable with Mary Goodnight, here Bond is despicable. Daffy Duck would spit the words out at him. Part of the problem is that it has become mandatory for a Bond-beating-up-a-woman scene, and here there is little provocation. There is a one dimensional, callous level now, not even redeemed by the fact that he's done many death defying feats before. Moore/Bond smacks her around, when she doesn't talk fast enough. The filmmakers want us to know Bond is brutal, or that he can, if a situation demands it, be as tough as he needs in order to survive the situation—but this isn't the way to go about telling us, gang. Connery convinced you of his toughness, there was no need to keep testing his masculinity; and throughout much of GUN the Bond character has a hatred toward women that nearly suggests he doesn't find any facet of women enjoyable.

At times, it appears that Saltzman and Broccoli read the reviews of the previous Bond films and acted on them. When the critics suggested that the films had degenerated into slapstick and buffoonery, they thought, "so *that's* what we've done." And, obviously, the picture made a great deal of money, so that must

be what the public wants from the Bond character these days." And what's this? Someone calls Bond the supreme sexist pig, with no respect at all for women—well, let's make him that. Maybe that's what's selling pictures this year, boys."

The audience goes in the theater to see James Bond and gets a computerized sales report. Let's hear it for lost magic.

After Moore/Bond grits his teeth at her, while proving he's a man, Andrea tells him that Scaramanga is going to the Bottom's Up Club.

We cut to the Bottom's Up Club, where the waitresses are undressed. It's amazing at times how much suggested nudity is in these films without there ever really being any at all.

Scaramanga has a Japanese Sampan in the harbor, and Andrea returns to the boat to deliver the golden bullets she has picked up, so that Scaramanga won't be aware that Bond is on the trail. Bond wants him to show up at the Bottoms Up Club.

Scaramanga's bedroom is exotic, and he enters the room dressed in black, somewhat reminiscent of Christopher Lee's attire as Dracula. He is never as majestically powerful as he is when portraying Dracula; but the character, aided by sets and background music, does have

an aura of the bizarre, and in this mating sequence with Andrea, his touching the side of her face with his Golden Gun is an unsubtle sexual symbol almost as magnetic and captivating as a spider's dance before devouring its mate.

Obviously it has been made clear that Scaramanga gets it on when he has someone to kill.

And that someone must be . . . James Bond!

* * *

With the way things have been going, that wouldn't be as horrible a fate as what actually waits in store for the character. The next scene has a touch of the old suspense narratives that were an integral part of the earlier Bond films. Remember Bond strapped to the laser table as the beam sliced upbetween his legs and Goldfinger talked to him good-naturedly? Remember Bond trapped in the gear shift room of a ski lift, about to be ground into the spinning wheels? For a moment, there is that kind of feeling. Bond is waiting on the empty street outside the Bottoms Up Club. The camera cuts in past a neon sign, revealing Scaramanga.

Another shot, back to Bond, tells us that he is unaware that Scaramanga is there.

Back to Scaramanga, just the eyes,

looking outward, the Golden Gun coming slowly into focus.

Bond begins to walk across the street, the gun is aimed at his back!

Two men exit the Bottoms Up Club. Scaramanga fires and Bond moves slowly, way too slow. If Scaramanga wanted him dead and conceivably missed with the first shot, he'd have a chance to fire three or four more times before Bond even got his gun from his shoulder holster.

But it wasn't Bond Scaramanga wanted to kill. It was Gibson. Back to the Solar energy plot. As Bond is taken into custody by the second man to exit the club, Nick Nack approaches Gibson's body, for what reason we're not yet sure. Bond, under gunpoint, is taken out to the sunken Queen Mary (there are some very fine shots of the half-submerged ocean liner as they approach it) and Bond learns that the interior actually serves as quarters for the Secret Service, including M.

Strange that Bond didn't know about this place. Still, it's an intriguing idea with a set composed of slanting walls to indicate the angle of the capsized vessel.

Inside that office, M. informs Bond that Lieutenant Hip (Soon-Taik-Oh) is one of their men. Hip had made contact with Gibson just before Scaramanga pulled the trigger.

Then it's obvious. Scaramanga never intended to kill Bond. Gibson was his intended target. Convenient that little coincidence. The Solex Agitator ("The essential unit to convert radiation from the sun into electricity on an industrial basis," says Q.) was on Gibson's person, but it was gone by the time Hip got to him.

Now we know what Nick Nack was doing on the scene.

Scaramanga has the solex agitator!

Hip informs them that Gibson had talked about setting up a second meeting at the residence of Hai Fat (Richard Loo), a multimillionaire who seems to be into legitimate business. Bond suggests that Hai Fat could afford Scaramanga's million dollar fee so he and Hip visit the man's estate in Bangkok. Bond takes his cigar along.

Bond goes over the wall, past some ornately-beautiful landscaped grounds (a man-made pond with an exquisite serpent ornamental coiling in and out of the water), and meets a nude girl, called Chew Mi, who is conveniently hiding anything that might ruin the film's PG rating by water that is just opaque enough.

Hai Fat interrupts the scene and wants to know who Bond is, whereupon we see that Q. has manufactured a third nipple for Bond who can now pose himself as Scaramanga.

Speaking as if he is Scaramanga, he tells Hai Fat that Bond was near Gibson when he made the hit and that he doesn't believe it is a coincidence. Hai Fat does not ask him what in the hell he is talking about, so it is obvious that he is

Scaramanga's employer.

Hai Fat invites Bond back to his estate that night for dinner, but as soon as Bond has departed, the real Scaramanga meets Hai Fat outside the millionaire's ornate mausoleum. Bond has erred again when figuring Hai Fat would have carried on his negotiations with Scaramanga without meeting the man personally.

Hip picks Bond up that night to drive him back to Hai Fat's estate, and for some reason, Bond and Mary Goodnight are no longer spouting derogatory remarks at each other. Bond makes his usual one line foreplay, when Mary claims, "I'll keep the wine properly chilled."

"And everything else warm, I trust," he replies, flatly.

Some schizophrenic relationship these two have going on, or maybe something got lost in the translation.

At any rate, Mary is back to fuming stereotyped female when Hip and Bond drive off, since she sees two girls sitting in the back of the car. What Mary does not know is that they are Hip's nieces, who are primarily there for the upcoming Martial Arts battle.

At Hai Fat's, Bond walks alone through a torture garden decorated with figurines executing other figurines via various gruesome means.

Barry's music tips us off immediately that all things are not as they seem.

And they aren't!

One of the statues is Nick Nack, dressed in a loin cloth and holding onto a pitchfork.

This movie seems to have a thing about turning lifeless, inanimate objects into living beings. They don't succeed at the attempt, but at least the figures do move around, albeit a bit mindlessly.

Bond is attacked by two sumo wrestlers, one of whom lifts Bond over his head. Bond is in a bad way until he reaches for the man's trunks and twists the cloth viciously, supposedly incapacitating the villain by "strangling" the man's genitals.

Don't blame me, folks. I just report the news, I don't make it up.

Bond doesn't remain conqueror for long. Nick Nack uses the pitchfork to knock him out, but before he can run Bond through, Hai Fat appears and says that Bond cannot be killed here. These motivations should not be scrutinized too closely, I suppose, but one can't help but wonder why Hai Fat has Bond taken to his Martial Arts school to kill Bond, when the torture garden was obviously a more secluded spot.

The reason, of course, is that it is a fine way to work karate and kung fu and a sword exhibition into the film. Bond awakens at Hai Fat's secluded Martial Arts school and watches a sword duel between two of the students. One goes down, gutted open, and the rest of the students, who don't think anything about the fact that one of them has just gone down under the blade,

applaud the winner's style. Practices like this could put a crimp in getting new recruits, wouldn't you say?

But Bond is not merely there as a spectator.

Unfortunately.

He is summoned out onto the mats to face his first opponent. When the student bows to Bond, he takes advantage of it, declining to return the bow and kicking him while he is in the middle of his civilized ritual.

It is much like the bit that Robert Redford utilizes in *BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID*, and while it is effective one has the feeling that it has been done before. That was never a problem with the early films.

The academy's star pupil, Chula (Chan Yiu Lam), confronts Bond while

audience out; quick shots, close and tight, bring the action up close, with immediate impact, and minus any clumsy extremes.

Whatever possessed Guy Hamilton, the director, to film these scenes in long, distant shots that only emphasize Moore's awkwardness during the combat, is barely fathomable. Moore reportedly studied Mongolian kung fu for two months prior to the film, but even if Moore were more graceful and fluid than he really is, it is absurd to think that he will look as effective as the student he battles, who obviously has studied the arts for years.

He looks scared. And he should.

Chula obviously has it all over him, kicking Bond all over the mat, with Bond landing heavily, the kind of fall that takes

for the window and dives out to escape. Somehow Hip and his two nieces just happen to be waiting outside (the plot stretches a mite thin about now).

Half the school comes charging out and the girls motion to James to stay cool—they will handle this. Hip and the two girls put on a show for Bond, while he stands watching what he couldn't accomplish against two guys. Those two girls and Hip take out more villains, with less effort, than Bond does in the entire film.

Ah, well, Bond is still hard as nails, he can still beat up Andrea, and in a few moments, to make up for the fact that he wasn't able to tangle with all these nogoodniks at the school, the script writers will probably come up with something devastating for him to do. Like betray a child who has just helped him by throwing the kid off a boat.

But the screenwriters have other things in store for our boy James, even before that.

Hip suggests they make their escape, and off they go, running for the car. Bond takes time out to throw one of their pursuers off a small foot bridge, and when he reaches the car, he closes the back door without climbing in (for some stupid reason). As he starts to run around the back of the car, to climb in on the other side, Hip takes off without him.

NO!

Don't do it.

Don't do this to James Bond.

They did it!

There is James Bond, chugging away after the car, legs pumping furiously, cheeks puffed out with exertion. Since very few animated films are made these days (due to the expense), it's probably a natural progression that the shenanigans of those cartoon images should invade live action films. But did it have to happen to James Bond?

The students chase Bond up the klong (canal) through the Floating Market. The location photography gives it some distinction, but the chase has little going for it other than to allow Bond to throw a young peddler off his boat. Oh, it does do *one* other thing. It reintroduces sheriff J. W. Pepper from *LIVE AND LET DIE*. The Alabama sheriff is on vacation with his wife in Thailand, and he cracks Archie Bunker-type jokes while Bond runs through the villain's boat, slicing it in half.

Somehow, it sounds more impressive when you write it down than the way it occurs on screen.

There is one beneficial aspect about J.W. Pepper's appearance: when the audience laughs at J.W., they aren't laughing at James Bond.

* * *

Back at Hai Fat's estate, he and Scaramanga have a falling out and Scaramanga puts together his Golden Gun (from gold cuff links, fountain pen and cigarette lighter).

It only has one gold bullet in its



the rest of the school chants approval. Chula looks arrogant, wearing the kind of sneer that audiences love to see the hero wipe off the villain's face. When he bows, he keeps his eyes on Bond at all times; a nice humorous touch that, for once, is not at Bond's expense. But the rest of the fight is.

For one thing, a well-choreographed Martial Arts fight needs the intricacy of a dance routine, and this fight has little of that. Also, the usual clipped, brief images and cuts that usually comprise a Bond fight are missing. That earlier structure of Bond battles gave the stunts a kinetic effect, a shattering impact that cuts from one stunning clip to the next. This type of storytelling makes it easier to fake the

the breath out of your lungs and makes the sky dim.

Bond really doesn't stand a chance.

Awkward kung fu.

I suppose that's a first.

To give Bond a chance, Chula eventually leaves himself wide open for the kind of round house punch that was all right for Moore to use when he played Brett Sinclair in the television series *THE PERSUADERS*, but which would give any self-respecting Martial Artist the chance to hammer his face, pelvis and shins about a dozen times.

Chula doesn't.

And it's surprising—he was doing so well.

Without further ado, Bond turns, runs

chamber!

That's all Scaramanga needs.

He puts the bullet right through Hai Fat's temple!

Scaramanga is cold and methodical, nearly a psychotic killer, yet he has an elegance and style of execution that at least give him personality.

Bond has neither elegance nor the style in **GOLDEN GUN**.

And you might just as well forget the personality.

If James Bond, as we knew him, is not wholly back in this latest Bond entry, the Doris Day version of James Bond is.

You don't believe it?

Wait.

* * *

Bond, in the meantime, tries to seduce Mary Goodnight during dinner, but apparently fails. When he returns to his room, Mary is there decked out in a little nighty.

"What made you change your mind?" Bond asks.

"I'm weak," she replied candidly.

But the candor has little time to go further as Andrea shows up at his door. Bond hides Mary under the blankets and does a weak Rock Hudson act with Andrea (Remember Doris and Rock in **LOVER, PLEASE COME BACK?**), while she tells him that it was actually her who sent Bond the golden bullet carved with initials.

Ah ha, so even Andrea knows how to send mail to Bond! Lord knows what *else* she knows.

But why send the bullet?

Because she wants Scaramanga dead and the only man in the whole wide (they don't use the word wonderful) world that can do such a masterful deed is 007.

This little plot revelation is delivered with about the same amount of subtlety as described above. After Andrea lays this new twist on Bond, she goes into the bathroom to make herself comfortable, and Bond leads Mary Goodnight into his closet where she stays while Andrea and Bond supposedly make it.

Talk about lack of class.

Britt Ekland gives a Doris Day pout with her lips as she tries to get comfortable in the closet.

Matter of fact, many of us watching the film are beginning to squirm uncomfortably.

* * *

Andrea returns to Scaramanga's bedroom, and while she is replacing her jewelry in the wall safe, we get a glimpse of the solex agitator that everyone wants. Scaramanga, having completed his kill, is awake and probably desiring Andrea, but he'd like to know where she has been.

Which doesn't bode well for Andrea. Not at all.

* * *

The next day, Bond enters Bangkok's largest boxing stadium to meet with Andrea. Andrea is supposed to smuggle the solex agitator out of Scaramanga's safe.

When Bond reaches her side, he finds

that Andrea is dead, a small trace of blood where, presumably, a gold bullet has entered between her breasts. Again, the audience has little empathy with Bond. When Scaramanga sits down beside Bond, and Nick Nack puts a gun to the back of his head, having pulled the weapon from a bag of peanuts, Bond quips, "A gun in a bag of peanuts. How original. What will they think of next?"

The old gun-in-the-bag-peanuts trick!

While Scaramanga gives Bond his life story, Bond continues to ignore the fact that Andrea is dead. Now, I'm not suggesting that Bond should have broken into hysteria, but a trace of compassion—or even anger—would have been nice. When Tilly Masterson is killed by Odd-job in **GOLDFINGER**, Connery/Bond doesn't utter a word, but

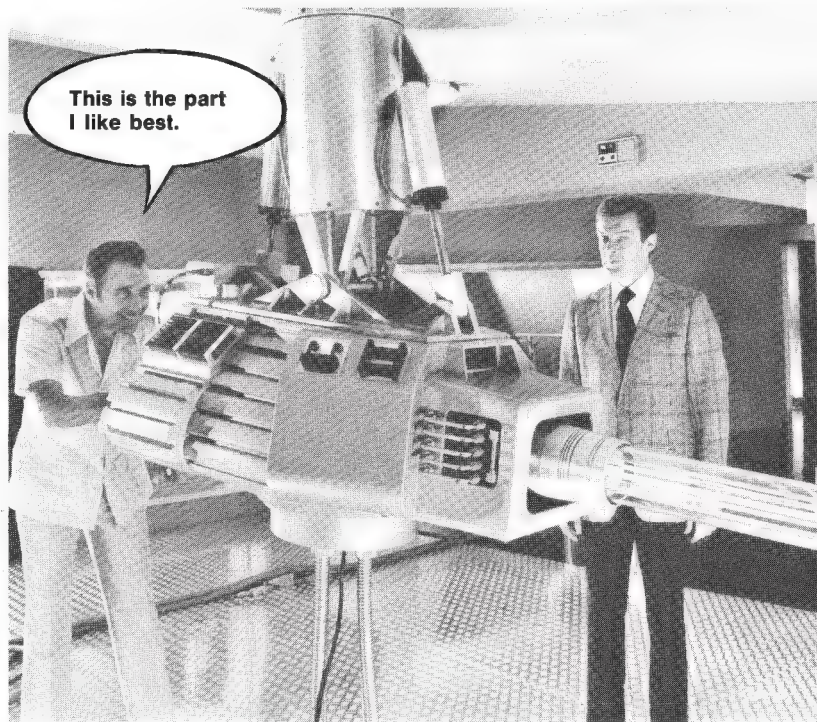
as a peanut vendor—ventures by and Bond surreptitiously scoops the solex agitator into Hip's tray while buying a bag of peanuts.

It does get mind-boggling after awhile, doesn't it?

Hip retreats to the exit of the boxing stadium and leaves the solex agitator with Mary Goodnight, while he returns to help James out. Bond certainly needs help. Buffoon that he is, he isn't even aware when Nick Nack has left and that he no longer has a gun covering him.

When Nick Nack passes Mary, she follows him to his car, only to get herself pushed into the trunk by Scaramanga, when she tries to place a listening device on the car.

Bond and Hip discover her abduction via two-way radios. Bond isn't much con-



the audience is immediately aware of Bond's reaction. You'll get yours, you bastard, is the look. Maybe not now—but you'll get yours!

With Moore/Bond, there is no reaction. As if Andrea's death, caused because she tried to help him, is meaningless to Bond. There is one hauntingly close shot of Andrea's face, eyes wide in death, mouth half open, the lips suggesting that they might have been about to speak, but never will again.

Bond, meantime, has spotted the solex agitator. It is on the floor at Andrea's feet. Now why Scaramanga let her abscond with this important and valuable item when he suspected her duplicity is never explained, but Hip—who is posing

cerned that Mary has gotten herself captured.

But she's got the solex agitator with her!

Bond breaks into an American Motors Car showroom at the precise moment that J.W. Pepper requests a test drive. He gets one. Bond sends the car hurtling through the showcase window, and one is glad J.W. is back. Now somebody else besides Bond and Goodnight can go around making an ass of themselves.

The chase is on through the streets of Bangkok with J.W. shouting encouragement all the way.

"Now, I know you," J.W. proclaims as he sits beside Bond.

"Oh no," Bond groans, as well he

might.

"You're that secret agent," J.W. asserts. "That English secret agent from England!" J.W. is right on top of the situation. In the next film, if this kind of stuff proves so popular, maybe Bond can speak lines like that.

Only kidding, fellas! Please. It was only a joke.

J.W. rants and raves, spewing Archie Bunkerisms against the Asian populace. Sometimes it seems like the audience laughs with J.W. instead of at him, and isn't that a sad thought. Unless, I suppose, you're one of them that laughed with him. But that couldn't have been you, right? Of course not.

The chase is on!

The Bangkok police decide to cash in on the action, so that they can smash a few of their cars. Scaramanga keeps trying to ditch 007, and finally it looks like he might have accomplished the feat. He doubles back on Bond, and passes him, going the opposite way.

But is Bond stymied?

Not for a moment.

Bond puts the car into reverse and begins racing.

Backwards!

And gaining speed while doing so!

Without stopping, the car is expertly swerved about. A beautiful car stunt.

The car turns a complete 180 degrees.

Without stopping!

And the stunt driver has gotten the car in forward by the time it has spun around so that in one flowing motion the car has both changed directions and shot off in pursuit.

Now, *that's* the kind of sensational stunt you can't find anywhere else. And low and behold, they have two of them, although they can't resist being cute with the second.

The chase finally settles down between Scaramanga and Bond, but they are on separate roads. A canal divides them. Bond, in frustration, can only watch as Nick Nack waves goodbye.

But Bond is stymied only for a moment!

This is more like the Bond of old. Decisive. Taking advantage of whatever slight opportunity.

A broken bridge that once spanned the canal now offers no more than a curving ramp on both sides of the water. Bond aims the car right at the rickety ramp.

"You're not going to . . .?" J.W. asks apprehensively.

"I sure am, boy," Bond answers, and slams down the accelerator. The car rockets toward the ramp, hits it, shoots off into the open air!

And, in mid-air, executes a perfect somersault!

If you thought that was a fake stunt—it wasn't! Some fool actually got into that car and did it for *real*. The stunt was figured by computer for feasibility, speed acceleration, etc., and the Bond crew were prepared to try the stunt three times. I suppose they meant to use three

cars and not three different drivers.

The stunt worked the first time.

And it is magnificent, spoiled only slightly by the absurd "Pop Goes the Weasel" sound effect that rides over the soundtrack. It's the kind of effect that Hamilton has been leaning toward in these recent Bond films, but here all restraint is left aside.

Landing on the other side, J.W. explains, "I've never done that before."

"Neither have I, actually," Bond confides stiffly. Probably doesn't want to lose his membership in good standing with the mannequin brigade.

Scaramanga is still one up on Bond when he reaches what appears to be a garage. Bond, J.W. and the Bangkok police arrive in time to see the walls go down, out back comes the car.

There is one difference.

The car now has wings and races down a runway, taking off into the air. It might be feasible—in fact, in many of the earlier Bond films the gadgetry and sophisticated machinery were possible in principle. The car-airplane seems phony, even if it is not. The distance shots of the car in flight are so small one is never really convinced that it works.

Goodnight, finally getting the trunk open so that she can continue her low-grade Abbott-and-Costello hijinks, discovers she is up in the air, so to speak.

* * *

Returning to M's office aboard the sunken Queen Mary, Bond learns Scaramanga's approximate whereabouts via the homing device Mary Goodnight had in her purse. Some beautiful aerial photography accompanies Bond's solo flight in a passenger airplane as he searches for Scaramanga's island hideaway.

He locates it and lands.

Nick Nack greets him, walking across the beach while balancing a tray with chilled champagne.

We know Scaramanga is expecting Bond since, in a nice piece of build-up to Bond and Scaramanga's final confrontation, Scaramanga tells his Red Chinese protectors that his guest, "won't be leaving."

Scaramanga, from a vantage point, has his gun aimed at Bond.

He fires!

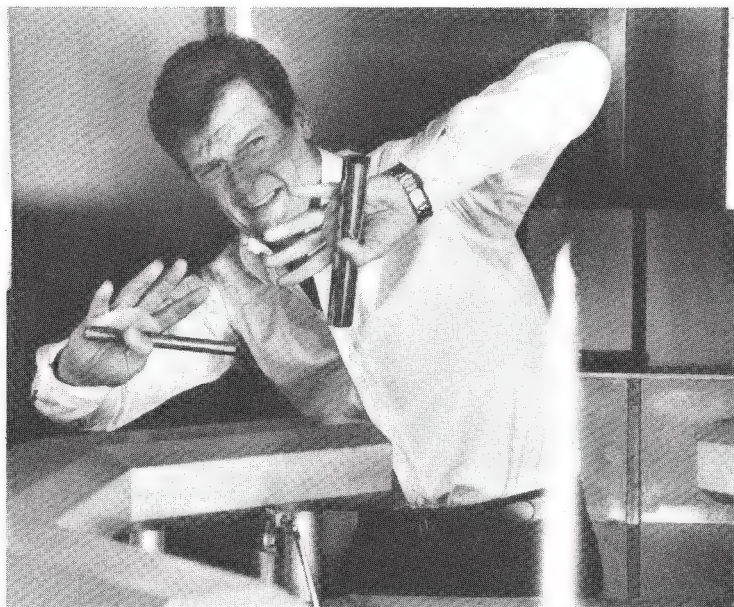
And shoots off the cork of the champagne bottle.

A nice introduction to the final scene. Scaramanga approaches Bond, and if Christopher Lee is not as powerfully enigmatic as he is in the scenes with Andrea, he has a charmingly lethal manner about him. In fact, he is nearly more dignified and likeable than Bond, who—after all—has his mannequin image to uphold.

"I'm so delighted to see you again," Scaramanga says, as he steps forward.



A duel of titans! Bond and Scaramanga, Walther PPK and Golden Gun, in classic dueling position.



Bond sees the light in one of the better moments of *MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN*.

So it would appear. Scaramanga immediately takes Bond to the vast solar energy plant built inside the mountain face along with the house. It is an impressive set though it comes nowhere near the interior of the volcano that was constructed by Ken Adams for *YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE*. There is only one guard and combination technician working in the huge room with its six two-ton vats holding, according to script, liquid helium. The vats hold 50,000 gallons of liquid.

Not just a drop in the bucket.

Scaramanga is a genial host, admitting that science is not his *forte* and that he understands little about these "super conductivity coils cooled by liquid helium." The process is set into operation by the sun. One of the huge domes slides back, revealing a sweep of sky. A mushroom-shaped piece of volcanic rock grows an addition at its peak, a sweeping reflector that opens and catches the rays of the sun, transmitting them to this room and converting them into laser energy that can burn right through a man.

Scaramanga keeps nothing sacred. He even shows Bond his latest toy, the real Golden Gun of the piece—as Scaramanga puts it—a huge weapon which, when fired at Bond's little aircraft down the beach, completely obliterates it. Or at least obliterates it as much as the special effects men can via their dynamiting job.

Part of Scaramanga's plan is to offer this solar energy to the highest bidder. Bond remarks that the oil companies will probably pay him to keep it *off* the market. Bond isn't completely stupid. See?

Scaramanga's reasoning for explaining everything to Bond reverts back to that time-worn nemesis of all villains, bragging to their captured enemy just before the enemy gets himself uncaptured. Hell, if he hadn't told Bond where everything was, the man wouldn't know where to begin to put an end to the project.

The last moments before Bond and Scaramanga duel are spent at a sumptuous meal for Bond and Mary Goodnight. Bond disapproves that Mary is dressed in a bikini, but Scaramanga is charmingly reassuring. "I like a girl in a bikini," he says, unctuously. "No concealed weapons."

Scaramanga doesn't make it mandatory to agree with him on this point.

During the meal, Scaramanga continues his civilized role as host, speaking of the upcoming duel in glowing terms and suggesting that he and Bond are brothers of the same ilk. Bond disagrees. He doesn't kill for money. Scaramanga counters that Bond kills for money, only a lot less of it, by accepting his pay from his government. Scaramanga maintains that it would have been easy to kill Bond at any time. That's certainly true enough, and both times Scaramanga has fired in Bond's direction Bond has moved so slowly that Scaramanga could have riddled him with bullets.

Bond taunts Scaramanga. "There's a useful four letter word for you . . . and you're full of it."

Man of the world that he is, Scaramanga scarcely blinks and they head out onto the beach where Bond and Scaramanga stand back to back, Bond holding onto his famous Walther PPK;

Scaramanga, his Golden Gun. Bond brings up the point that Scaramanga has only one shot to his six.

"I only need one," Scaramanga informs him confidently.

Nick Nack performs the ceremonies, counting off their twenty paces. At the end of the count, Bond whirls about, firing at empty air. Scaramanga is gone. Another bit of one upmanship on Bond by Scaramanga.

Nick Nack motions for Bond to follow him. "If you kill him, all this be mine," he explains and suckers Bond into the maze of rooms that opened the film.

The stalking begins. The cowboys and racketeers make their play. The mirrors distort images. Glass walls suddenly bar Bond's path, but he discovers that he's high on a catwalk and lets himself down over the side, climbing stealthily through the framework of the catwalk.

Well, he moves stealthily for a few seconds before he conveniently lets his Walther PPK drop from the waist band of his trousers. With all the people being attacked at groin level in this film, it's surprising Bond would take the risk. With his luck, the PPK would misfire.

Hamilton does little with the stalking; in fact, the first killing with the gangster has more tension than this final confrontation. One wonders why Scaramanga would consider the death of 007 a work of art.

Scaramanga, hearing the clatter of Bond's fallen gun, moves in his direction and ends up dead.

How?

You don't really have to ask, do you?

Bond has become the statue that we saw in the beginning of the movie. From mannequin, to person (one dimensional as he is), to mannequin again.

Scaramanga is dead, and immediately the mazes are easy to wander through. In fact, Mary Goodnight, who has managed to push the one guard on the island into the vats of liquid helium, has no trouble meeting up with James.

Bond and Mary head back into the laboratory to reclaim the solex agitator when they discover the whole place is beginning to blow up. The body temperature of the guard Mary threw into the liquid helium is raising the temperature inside the vats to critical level.

Bond descends towards the solex agitator, and Mary—leaning over to look down on James—pushes her bikini-clad rear end against one of the console buttons.

The button that opens the sky light and activates the reflectors!

For a moment, there is a touch of the old Hamilton and Barry magic. A hint of *GOLDFINGER* and *ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE*. Bond is nearly burned through by the concentration of light. When a cloud passes over the sun and the beam shuts off abruptly, Bond assumes that Mary has managed to turn off the machine.

She hasn't!

And Bond straddles the machine, right in the path of the ray.

The camera cuts back and forth from Bond to the cloud, panning along with the sky formation, the hint of sunlight menacingly behind it. Once the cloud passes, the beam will be activated and James Bond will have met his end.

It might actually have been more merciful that way!

This is the Hamilton that pulled out all the stops, making us wait with exquisite agony as we become convinced that Goldfinger really would let his laser ray slice Bond right up the middle. Even though—inside—you knew it really couldn't happen, another part of you kept saying that it could, *it could*, even after you'd seen the film several times.

Hamilton does here what he fails to do in the end stalking scene. He squeezes every last second of agony out of that passage of the sun, and right at the last second, the very last second as the beam lances down bringing life or death (in this case most assuredly death), Bond pries the solex agitator loose and drops out of the path of the beam!

As Bond and Goodnight escape from the lab it goes up in explosions, but they are of a minor nature when one compares them to the cataclysmic conclusions to such Bond entries as *YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE*, *ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE*, etc.

To remain completely predictable, the customary second ending for a Bond film (customary since *FROM RUSSIA, WITH LOVE* brought Rosa Klebb back into the picture as a last-minute threat) has Nick Nack attacking Bond as he and Goodnight are about to bed down on Scaramanga's sampan.

It's back to ludicrous situations, as Nick Nack hides under furniture and kicks Bond in the shins; and then, the final indignity, knocks Bond ass-over-heels when he tries prodding Nick Nack from his hiding place. Bond finally closes Nick Nack in a huge trunk and ties him to the riggings of the sampan.

Nick Nack is not nearly as exciting a villain as Dr. Lovelace was on *THE WILD WEST*. But then, that was a television series, and who can expect the Bond films—the biggest money grossing film series of all time—to even compete?

Bond returns to Goodnight for the customary coupling fadeout with the inevitable interruption by M. who calls on Scaramanga's phone. How he got the number is anybody's guess. Even more amazing is that, with one kiss, Moore/Bond states, "She's just coming, Sir."

Now that, my friends, *is* amazing.

We fade out on Nick Nack, hanging forlornly from the rigging as the Barry music comes up full and Lulu sings lyrics telling us that James Bond is here. A final wince and the lights go up telling us



Bond and Nick Nack assume bullfighting stances, while Mary Goodnight shouts "Ole!"

to watch for Bond's return in *THE SPY WHO LOVED ME*.

* * *

James Bond's major talent might be survival, but can even *he* survive some of the travesties perpetrated against him in these latest films?

So far, the answer is yes.

It might conceivably alter audiences' enthusiasm to attend these films, but English and American movie markets are not the only source of income for these films.

For instance, *Variety*, in its February 12, 1975 issue, lists the amounts that *GUN* has grossed overseas. Below are a couple of the figures:

Japan	\$4,064,812
Germany	\$3,899,080
France	\$3,706,247

The list goes on. Those aren't small figures they're talking about, and as long as the cash register keeps ringing that kind of song you can expect to see this kind of James Bond returning again and again.

Is there anything that can be done about such a sorry situation?

Not much, it would seem. No true Bond fanatics are going to stay away from these films. They will return to each succeeding film in the hope that the movies will become that which they once were, rather than the parodies of themselves that they have become.

But remember, each time you pay admission into one of those films, you have little right to complain—you are adding your support to the direction that the film's have taken. Try keeping your attendance down to one viewing. Some-

how, I have the feeling that's something most will find quite easy to do.

Hopefully, if monetary returns do fall off a bit, Saltzman and Broccoli and United Artists won't merely decide that the character has had it, but will instead re-evaluate what they have done with this multi-million dollar property.

That they should ridicule and tear at the foundation of the very personality that made their films so successful seems destructive, although self-deprecation probably has its saleable points. Some comics have managed to survive quite well with that type of routine. It's unfortunate that Bond should be reduced to such a role.

If *ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE* had maintained the kind of profits the other Bond pictures did, we might be seeing more of the extraordinary adventure films (with a sense of humor that isn't degrading) that have excited audiences since the film medium first came into being. A re-examination of the reasons why that particular film failed should be a priority on the part of United Artists and Saltzman and Broccoli. The length and the miserable ad campaign for *MAJESTY'S* certainly can take much of the blame, far more than the fact that director Peter Hunt played the film straight.

One look at that poster of a faceless Bond for *MAJESTY'S* is proof enough of poor design; and the television hype for *MAJESTY* was nowhere as intense as the one released for *GOLDEN GUN*.

Let's hope the next ad proclaiming James Bond to be back is true.

It would be a welcome change of pace.



APRIL FOOL'S
DAY, 1975. TIME'S
SQUARE, NEW
YORK.



PEOPLE HURRY
FOR DIFFERENT
REASONS ON
THIS STREET...

ONE BEING
THAT SOME
OF THEM
ARE SCARED...



NOT DARING
TO TRUST ANY
OF THE EYES
THAT TURN
TO FOLLOW
THEIR FLIGHT...



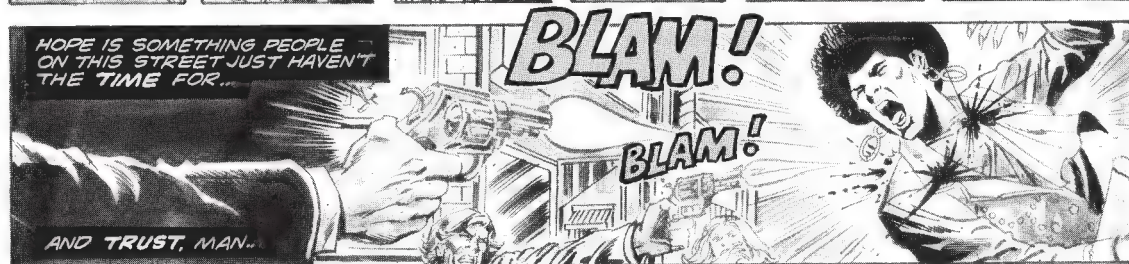
NOT DARING
TO TRUST IN
ANYTHING
THESE DAYS...

ALTHOUGH IN
TRUST THEY
MIGHT HAVE
FOUND THEIR
ONE CHANCE
AT HOPE...



WHAT-?

HOPE IS SOMETHING PEOPLE
ON THIS STREET JUST HAVEN'T
THE TIME FOR...

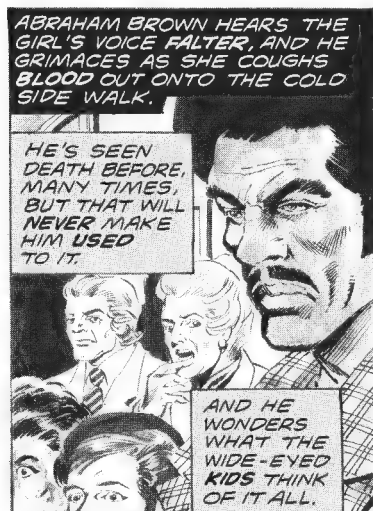


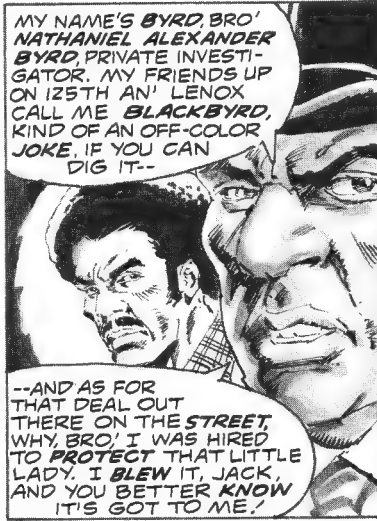
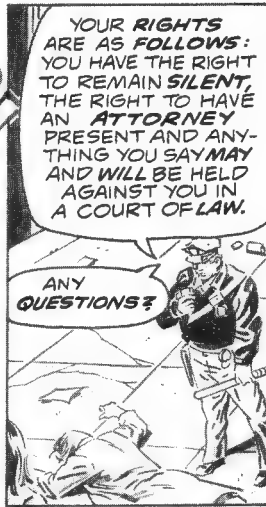
AND TRUST, MAN...

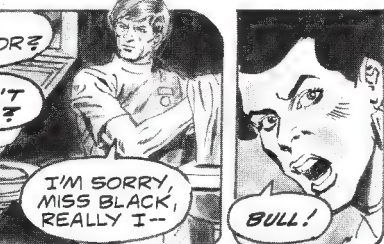
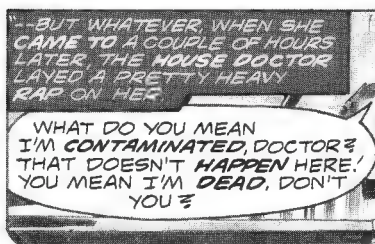
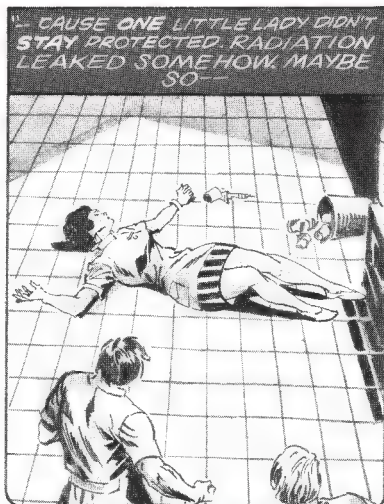


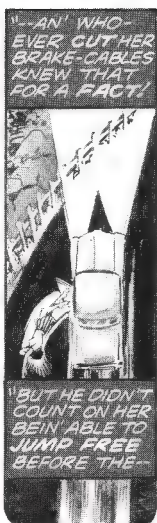
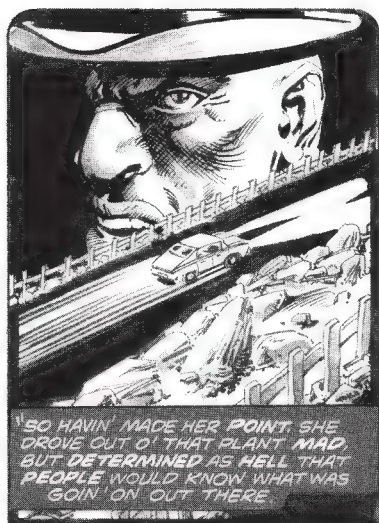
STORY: BILL MANTLO ART: GEORGE PEREZ & THE TRIBE











ABE BROWN DOESN'T NEED TO VOICE AN ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION. THEY EMERGE OUT ONTO BROADWAY.

SO WHAT DO WE DO NOW, BLACKBYRD?

WE, BRO'Z
YEAH, I GUESS
IT IS THE
TWO OF US.

WELL, I GOT ME AN IDEA. I STRUCK OUT ON THE FIRST PART OF THIS JOB, KEEPIN' THAT LITTLE LADY ALIVE, BUT MAYBE I CAN MAKE UP FOR IT BY GETTIN' THE PEOPLE WHO KILLED HER--

--AN' BY PASSIN' ON HER NOTES LIKE SHE WANTED DONE. YOU DIG?

I DIG, BLACKBYRD, AND I GOT ME A FEELIN' THAT YOU'RE GONNA NEED ALL THE HELP YOU CAN GET.

THE NAME'S BROWN, BROTHER--

--ABE BROWN.

THE LOWER EAST SIDE, MIDNIGHT.

SHIPS PASS LIKE DRIFTING SPIRITS THROUGH THE FOG THAT HAS SETTLED LIKE A SHROUD OVER THE EAST RIVER.

AND TWO SILENT FIGURES USE THAT SHROUD AS A COVER.

ONE IN A COSTUME THAT DRAWS A SMOTHERED LAUGH FROM THE OTHER.

THE OTHER IN A BATTERED HAT AND TATTERED COAT THAT CATCHES A LAUGH IN RETURN.

HEY MAN, WHERE'D YOU GET THEM DUDS? YOU IN A CIRCUS?

NOPE. ME AN' A COUPLE OF FRIENDS WEAR THESE THREADS WHEN WE'RE OUT WORKIN' AT SAVIN' THE WORLD. THEY COME WITH THE JOB.

SO I AIN'T THE ONLY ONE WHO'S NUTS ENOUGH TO DO A GIG LIKE THIS FOR A LIVIN'.



WELL, THAT'S NICE TO **KNOW**.

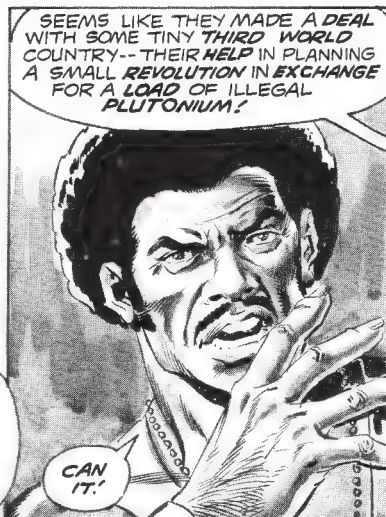
ANYHOW, LET ME **CLUE** YOU AS TO WHY WE'RE OUT HERE ON THIS SOGGY **PIER** AT AN HOUR WHEN ALL O' **HARLEM'S** LIT UP AN' **STRUTTIN'!**



BLACKBYRD POINTS TO A FIGURE WHO HAS APPEARED FROM OUT OF THE **SHADOWS** ON THE **WHARF**.

THAT'S REASON **NUMERO UNO, BRO'!**

THE **LITTLE LADY'S** NOTES PIN THIS PLACE AS A **DUMPING GROUND** FOR A LOT OF THE **HOT STUFF** HER COMPANY WAS BRINGIN' INTO THIS COUNTRY.



SEEMS LIKE THEY MADE A **DEAL** WITH SOME TINY **THIRD WORLD** COUNTRY-- THEIR **HELP** IN PLANNING A **SMALL REVOLUTION** IN EXCHANGE FOR A **LOAD** OF **ILLEGAL PLUTONIUM!**

CAN IT!



"THERE'S A **CAR** COMIN'."

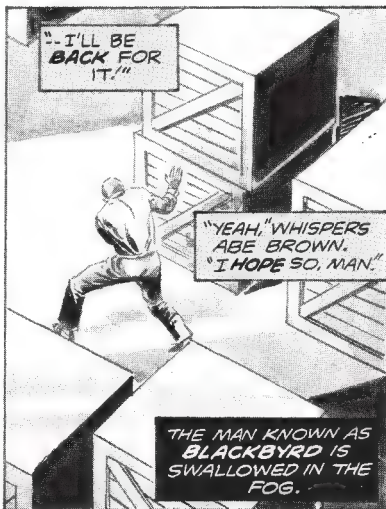
THE **DARK CAR** GLIDES **SOUNDLESSLY** ONTO THE **PIER...**



AND **ABE BROWN** AND **BLACKBYRD** STRAIN TO HEAR THE VOICES THAT ARE **MUFFLED** BY THE **FOG**.

CAN'T HEAR **WORTH A DAMN** IN THIS **SOUP!**

GOT TO GET **CLOSER!** HOLD ONTO MY **HAT, BRO'!**



--I'LL BE **BACK** FOR IT."

"YEAH," WHISPERS **ABE BROWN**. "I **HOPE** SO, MAN."

THE MAN KNOWN AS **BLACKBYRD** IS SWALLOWED IN THE **FOG**.



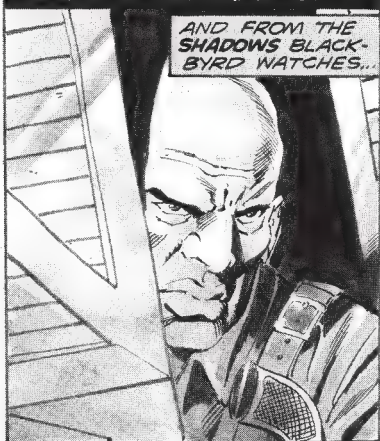
EVENIN', **MR. MILLS**. THE **SKIPPER'S** BEEN WAITIN' FOR OVER AN' **HOUR**, AND HE'S **PLENTY RAW** ABOUT IT.

HE HAS NO **REASON** TO BE. THE **MONEY** WE'VE PAID HIM FOR THIS **JOB** SHOULD HAVE BEEN MORE THAN ENOUGH TO **SOOTHE** HIS **NERVES**, **SAILOR!** SHOW US **IN!**

ALL RIGHT, **CAP'N**. THIS **WAY**, UH--THE **LADY--**

--COMES WITH ME. **MISS DEVON** IS MY-- EH--**SECRETARY**. YOU **UNDERSTAND**, **SAILOR?**

THE GIRL SMILES AS THE SAILOR'S EYES ROVE FREELY OVER HER, AND THE TWO MEN EXCHANGE A WINK OF UNDERSTANDING.



AND FROM THE SHADOWS BLACK-BYRD WATCHES...



AS THE PAIR DISSAPPEARS INTO THE WAREHOUSE BEHIND THEM AND ARE LOST TO HIS SIGHT AS THE DOOR CLOSES.

HE SUBCONSCIOUSLY NOTES THE POSITIONS OF THE TWO MEN STILL BY THE CAR...



AND, WITHOUT THINKING, HIS MIND DEEP INTO THE PROBLEM AT HAND...

HE COUGHS.



WHAT WAS THAT?

IT CAME FROM OVER THERE!

SOMEBODY MUST BE--

SOMEBODY IS!

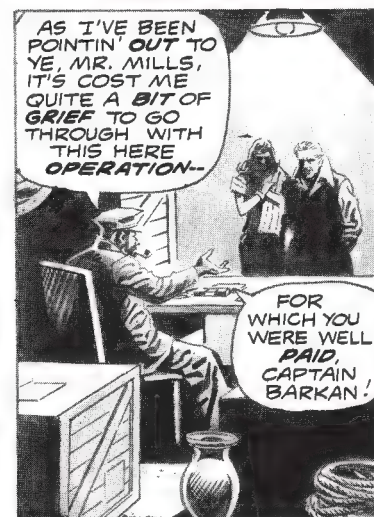
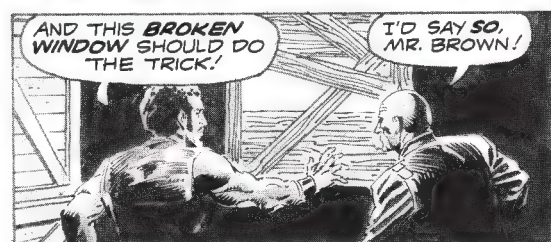


WHOOOFF!

AND LIKE A SILENT STORM THE SON OF THE TIGER STRIKES!

UNGHHHHH!

WORDLESSLY ABE BROWN DISPATCHES THE SAILOR, THE LATTER SURE, AS DARKNESS OVERTAKES HIM, THAT HE'S BEEN HIT BY A FLOTILLA OF BATTLESHIPS.



YOU'VE JUST MADE A **FOOLISH** MISTAKE, CAPTAIN BARKAN. YOU SHOULD HAVE ACCEPTED THE ARRANGEMENTS **AGREED TO--**



ABE AND BLACKBYRD LISTEN **STUNNED...** AS DO THE MEN WITHIN WHO STARE AT THE **GUN** WHICH THE GIRL POINTS AT THE **HEAD** OF THE **TRAITOROUS CAPTAIN.**

--AS IT **IS**, YOU **KNOW** TOO MUCH! AND IF YOU CAN BE **BOUGHT** SO EASILY BY US--



--YOU CAN BE **BOUGHT** BY ANYONE!



NO! DON'T, I--

AAAGGHHH!



FAREWELL, CAPTAIN BARKAN!

GERALD MILLS STANDS **SHATTERED** BY HIS **MISTRESS** ACTIONS. HE IS USED TO **INDIRECT** MURDER, CARRIED ON BY OTHERS AT HIS ORDERS, NOT THIS **DIRECT** AND **BRUTAL** FORM OF **BUSINESS.**



MILLS! PAY ATTENTION!

THE **PLUTONIUM** IS ABOARD THE **TANKER** AND OUR MEN STAND **READY** TO **CAST OFF!** I DON'T WANT ANY **TRACE** OF THIS PLACE LEFT FOR **ANYONE** WHO MIGHT COME **LOOKING** FOR OUR DEAD FRIEND **HERE!** DO YOU **UNDERSTAND** ME, MILLS?

GERALD MILLS **NODS** AND THE **YOUNG WOMAN** LOOKS **UNCERTAINLY** AT HIM FOR A MOMENT, THEN LEAVES THROUGH A BACK DOOR, NOT WISHING TO BE SEEN BY THE GUARDS AT THE CAR, UNAWARE THAT THEY ARE AS **INCAPABLE** OF SIGHT AS THEIR **MURDERED CAPTAIN.**



WHOOEE! THESE FOLKS PLAY FOR KEEPS!

AND THEY'RE ABOUT TO WIPE OUT SOME OF YOUR EVIDENCE, MAN--

"--UNLESS YOU CAN **STOP** THE **SHAKY DUDE** IN THERE WITH THE **MATCHES** WHILE I GO AFTER HIS **BOSS-LADY!**"



BLACKBYRD SMILES AS ABE SLIPS AWAY...

AND THE **SMILE** REMAINS ON HIS LIPS AS HE COMES UP **BEHIND** THE MAN WHO ORDERED THE **DEATH** OF HIS CLIENT.



GO AHEAD, MR. MILLS, REACH FOR YOUR GUN! BETWEEN YOU AN' ME--



--NUTHIN' WOULD PLEASE ME BETTER!

THE **SHOT** ECHOES THROUGHOUT THE **DOCK AREA**, AND ON THE **PIER** THE **YOUNG WOMAN** **TURNS** FOR A SECOND...



THEN SHE SHRUGS.

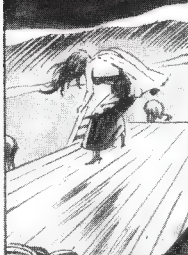
BLAM
BLAM

DADDY SAYS THAT NEW DIRECTORS ARE A DIME A DOZEN...

DOESN'T HE...

MISS CAXON?

THE QUESTION
GOES
UNANSWERED...



AS THE DAUGHTER
OF A MAN WHO
OWNS MOST
OF AMERICA'S
WEALTH
REACHES THE
END OF THE
PIER...

CLOSELY
FOLLOWED BY
ABE BROWN...



WHO REMEMBERS
THE FACE OF A
DEAD GIRL ON
42ND STREET...

AND BLOOD
RUNNING RED
ON A COLD
SIDEWALK...



AND HE
SWEARS...

THAT AT LEAST THIS
ONE OF THOSE WHO
ORDERED THAT GIRL'S
DEATH...



...WILL NOT ESCAPE.

SHE'S HEADIN' OUT
OVER THE END OF THE
WHARF!

WHICH MEANS SHE'S
EITHER A HOT ONE FOR
LATE-NIGHT SWIMS IN
THE EAST RIVER--



--OR THERE'S
GOTTA BE A--



--BOAT!

WHAT NOW, SON OF
THE TIGER?

AS YOU ARC YOUR BODY
OVER THE DARK WATERS.

DO YOU HEAR THE
VOICE OF YOUR DEAD
TEACHER, MASTER
KEE, COMMENDING
YOU ON YOUR
ACTIONS THIS
NIGHT?



DO YOU
SEE THE
FACES OF
YOUR FELLOW
TIGER SONS,
BOB DIAMOND
AND LIN SUN,
SMILING
APPROBATION AS
YOU KNIFE THROUGH
THE DAMP, NIGHT FOG?

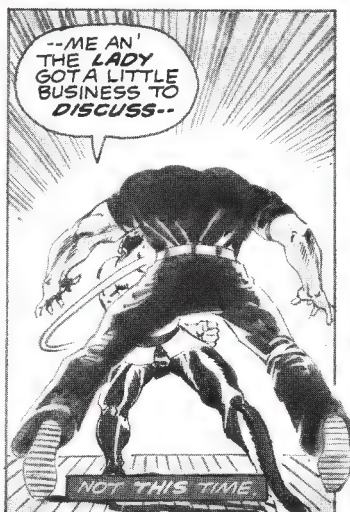
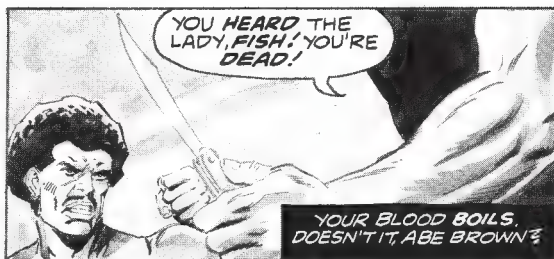
DO YOU WONDER, ABE
BROWN, WHERE THEY ARE
NOW AND WHAT THOUGHTS
FILL THEIR EVENING?

OR DO YOU CLEAR YOUR HEAD
OF QUESTIONS KNOWING THEY'D
ONLY BE IN THE WAY...

AS YOU LAND, FEET-FIRST,
IN THE BELLY OF THE BOAT
AND SCREAM FROM THE
DEPTHS OF YOUR SOUL...

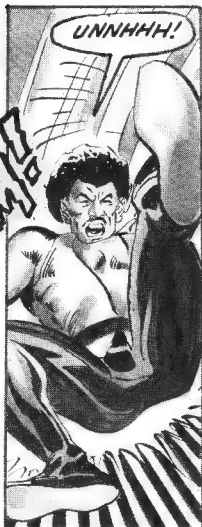


KILLER!





--I'M AFRAID
YOU'LL JUST HAVE
TO BE REMOVED!



UNNNHHH!



THE BULLET BITES DEEP
INTO ABE'S ARM. A
ROLL OF THE BOAT
HAVING SENT IT THERE
RATHER THAN INTO HIS
HEART, WHERE IT WAS
AIMED.

GIVE IT UP,
LADY! A FRIEND
OF MINE'S GOT
YOUR MR. MILLS
AND HE'S PROBABLY
SPILLIN' THE WHOLE
THINGS TO THE
COPS RIGHT NOW!
YOU'RE DONE FOR!



NICE TRY, BLACK
BOY, BUT I'M NOT
BUYING ANY! SO
LONG!

A BEJEWELLED
FINGER TIGHTENS
ON THE TRIGGER



THERE IS A BLINDING
FLASH OF LIGHT...



AND ABE BROWN IS
STUNNED TO FIND
THAT HE'S NOT DEAD.

THIS IS THE HARBOR
PATROL! LAY DOWN YOUR
WEAPON, YOU ARE
UNDER ARREST!



NOT NOW!

NOT WHEN
WE'RE SO
CLOSE.

THE SMALL GUN BARKS WILDLY
INTO THE GLARE OF THE
APPROACHING LIGHTS...



GOT TO
STOP HER--

--BUT MY
ARM FEELS
LIKE IT'S ON
FIRE--

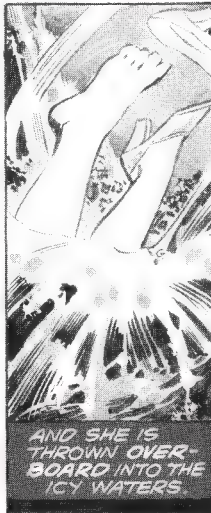


--AND THE
BOAT'S ROLLIN'
AROUND
LIKE A--

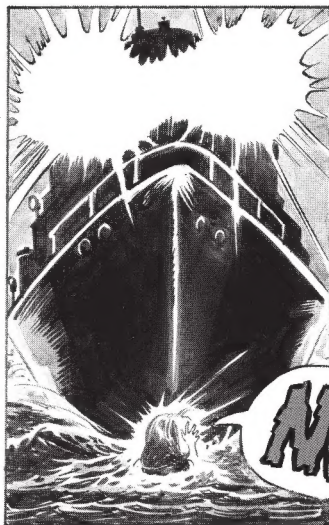
LADY!
WATCH
OUT!

OH!

THE TOSsing BOAT CATCHES
HER OFF GUARD
SLAMMING HER VIOLENTLY
AGAINST THE SIDE...



AND SHE IS
THROWN OVER-
BOARD INTO THE
ICY WATERS.

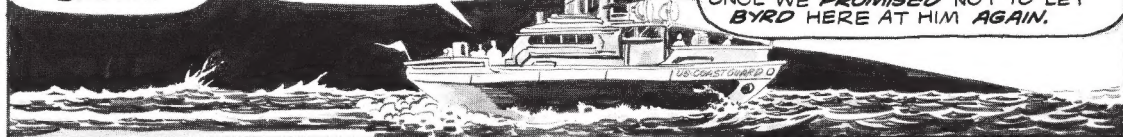


NOOOOOO

WE FOUND YOU
AND THE GIRL
AFTER RECEIVING
A CALL FROM
MR. BYRD HERE,
BROWN.

HE'D GOTTEN A NASTY
WOUND IN THE ARM FROM
MILLS, BUT HE MANAGED
TO STOP HIM FROM SETTING
FIRE TO THE WAREHOUSE--

--AND MILLS WAS MORE THAN
WILLING TO TALK, EVEN THOUGH ALL
THE EVIDENCE WE'VE FOUND SO FAR
WOULD HAVE BEEN MORE THAN ENOUGH
TO CLOSE DOWN THE WHOLE OPERATION,
ONCE WE PROMISED NOT TO LET
BYRD HERE AT HIM AGAIN.



ABE BROWN AND NATHANIEL BYRD
LOOK OUT OVER THE RAILING OF
THE SPEEDING CRAFT AS IT
GUNS ITS WAY THROUGH THE
STILL-HEAVY FOG.

LOOKS LIKE WE DID IT,
BLACKBYRD! WITH THEIR SHIP
AND ALL THE PLUTONIUM UNDER
GUARD, THE WAREHOUSE SAFE,
AND MILLS UNDER ARREST--

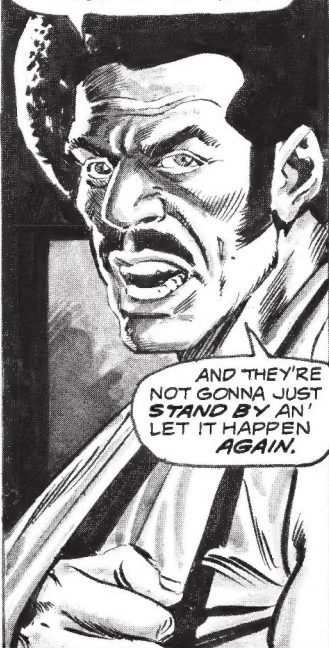
--AND THE FOLDER YOU
GOT FROM THE GIRL...I THINK
SOMEBODY'LL BELIEVE HER
STORY NOW!



YOU THINK
SO, BRO'Z?
YOU REALLY
THINK SO?

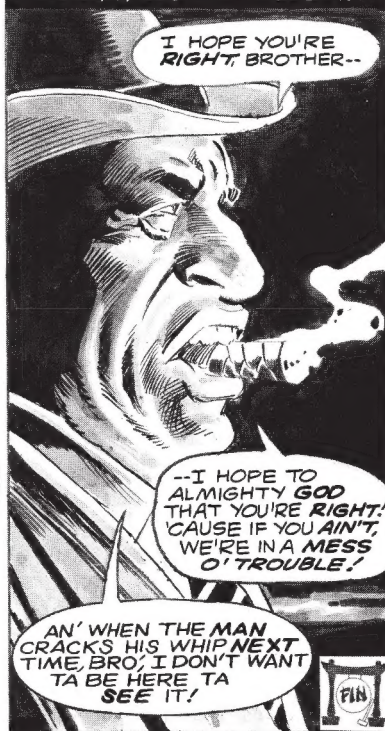
DIDN'T YOU DIG
ON WHAT'S BEEN
GOIN' DOWN IN THE
OLD U.S. OF A. THE
PAST COUPLE OF
YEARS?

SURE I DIG, BLACK-
BYRD! BUT ALL THAT'S
DONE, MAN! THE PEOPLE
STOOD UP AN' TOLD THOSE
BASTARDS WHERE TO
GET OFF AN' CANNED THE
WHOLE LOT OF 'EM!



AND THEY'RE
NOT GONNA JUST
STAND BY AN'
LET IT HAPPEN
AGAIN.

BLACKBYRD DRAWS SLOWLY ON
HIS CIGAR, LOST IN THOUGHT.



I HOPE YOU'RE
RIGHT, BROTHER--

--I HOPE TO
ALMIGHTY GOD
THAT YOU'RE RIGHT!
CAUSE IF YOU AIN'T,
WE'RE IN A MESS
O' TROUBLE!

AN' WHEN THE MAN
CRACKS HIS WHIP NEXT
TIME, BRO', I DON'T WANT
TA BE HERE TA
SEE IT!



NEXT ISSUE

SONS OF THE TIGER UNLEASHED!

A grim and bloody murder on the set
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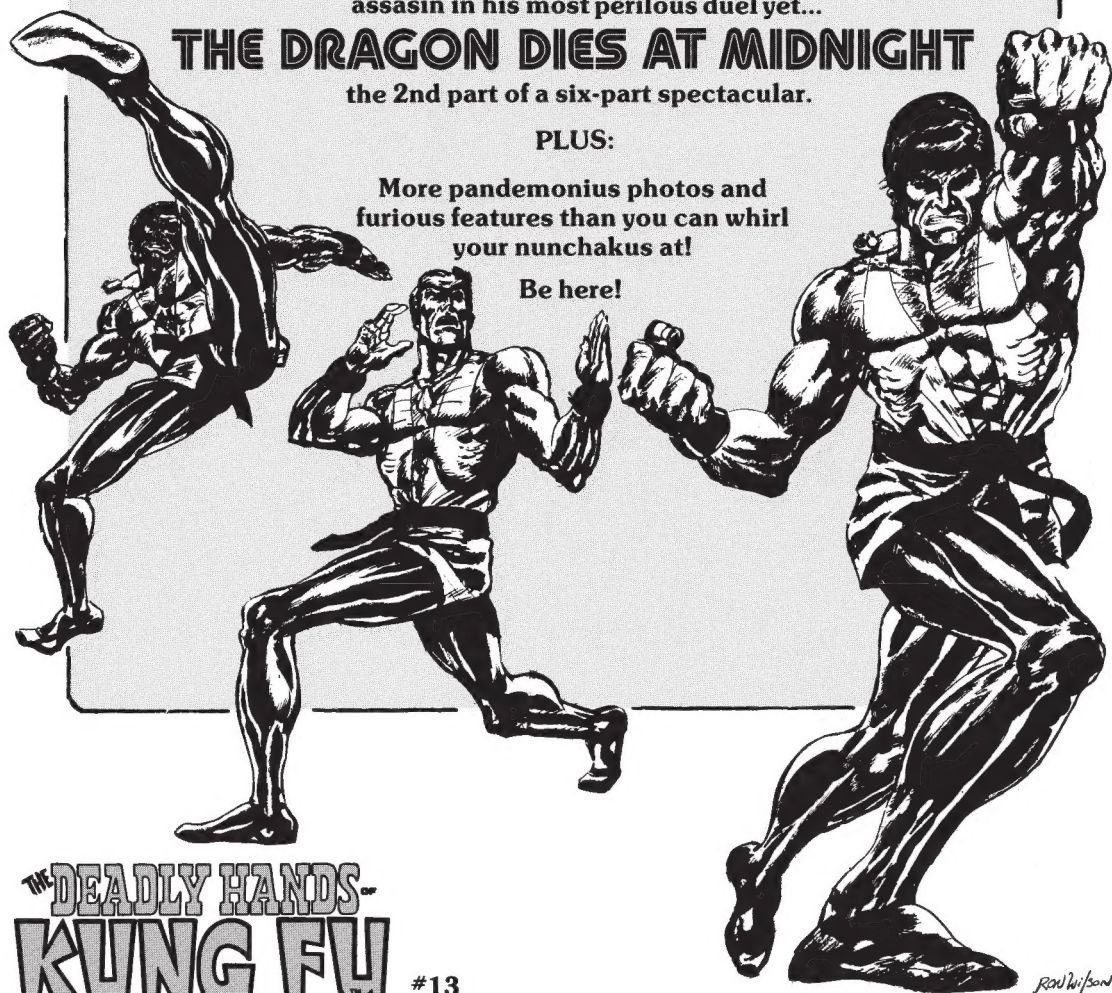
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#13

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THE DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU
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you shall pay
most grievously,
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before you do something
I might regret...**

**...or is it
too late for that?**

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